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ABSTRACT

This action research project describes a program for improving literal and inferential reading comprehension skills aimed at increasing overall academic achievement. The targeted population consisted of third, fourth, and fifth grade students in middle class communities located in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher observations and results from the S.T.A.R. standardized tests. Analysis of probable cause data indicates that students exhibit low literal and inferential reading comprehension skills that hinder academic achievement. Probable causes were low self-esteem and a lack of intrinsic motivation, poor recognition skills, limited vocabularies, a lack of activating prior knowledge, limited experiences, and a deficiency in understanding and using inferential thinking and reading comprehension strategies. Evidence of these probable causes was found in research literature and at the targeted sites. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of five major categories of interventions: activation of prior knowledge, the teaching of inferential thinking skills, Directed Reading Thinking Activity (D.R.T.A.), Question Answer Relationship (Q.A.R.), Self-Monitoring Questions, and Literature Circles. Post intervention data indicated an overall increase in student Instructional Reading Level and in student Grade Equivalent scores. Post attitudinal survey data indicated an increase in intrinsic motivation to read for enjoyment. Contains 27 references, 22 figures and 12 tables of data. Appendixes contain a student survey; student worksheets, story maps, and graphic organizers; and outlines for discussing character and plot, making summaries and connecting stories to the world outside. (Author/SR)

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ED 433 497

IMPROVING STUDENTS'

INFERENTIAL AND LITERAL READING COMPREHENSION

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight Field-Based Master's Program

CS 013 700

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This project was approved by

Advisor

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Dean, School of Education

This action research project is dedicated to:

My husband, Arnie
My children, Sam and Charlie
My mother, Ruth Levy

For all their patience and encouragement

Abstract

This action research project describes a program for improving literal and inferential reading comprehension skills aimed at increasing overall academic achievement. The targeted population consisted of third, fourth, and fifth grade students in middle class communities located in the Midwest. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher observations and results from the S.T.A.R. standardized tests.

Analysis of probable cause data indicates that students exhibit low literal and inferential reading comprehension skills that hinder academic achievement. Probable causes were low self-esteem and a lack of intrinsic motivation, poor recognition skills, limited vocabularies, a lack of activating prior knowledge, limited experiences, and a deficiency in understanding and using inferential thinking and reading comprehension strategies. Evidence of these probable causes was found in research literature and at the targeted sites.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of five major categories of interventions: activating prior knowledge, teaching inferential thinking skills, Directed Reading Thinking Activity (D.R.T.A.), Question Answer Relationship (Q.A.R.), Self-Monitoring Questions, and Literature Circles.

Post intervention data indicated an overall increase in student Instructional Reading Level (IRL) and in student Grade Equivalent (GE) scores. Post attitudinal survey data indicated an increase in intrinsic motivation to read for enjoyment.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted third and multiage fourth/fifth grade classes exhibited low literal and inferential reading comprehension skills that hindered academic achievement. Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher observations, parent and student surveys, and Standardized Test for Assessment of Reading (S.T.A.R.).

Immediate Problem Context

School A

School A is located in a suburban town west of a large Mid-west city. The two-story building has a total enrollment of approximately 700 students in kindergarten through sixth grade and was built in 1989. School A has a 49% female and 51% male population. The student population is 13% Asian/Pacific, 2% Hispanic, 1% Black, 83% White, and less than 1% Native American. There are more than 60 languages spoken by the students in School A's district and primarily thirteen different languages spoken in School A. The population can be described as middle income. One percent of School A students are from low-income families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or

eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. Approximately 4% of students receive gifted program services, 6% Limited English Proficiency services, and 3% of the students receive special education services. The attendance rate for the 1996-1997 school year was 96%, with a 7% mobility rate and a 0% chronic truancy rate. Parents participate actively at School A as shown by the nearly 8,000 hours of volunteer time donated during the 1996-97 school year.

School A is part of a large district consisting of three junior high schools and eleven elementary schools. The average third grade class size in School A is 28.3 students. The staff of School A includes: one principal, one building assistant, four grade level classroom teachers for grades K-6, three gifted teachers, two social workers, a speech pathologist, one multimedia specialist, two physical education teachers, one music teacher, a part-time band instructor, a computer teacher, one Reading Recovery Teacher, a Title I Teacher, and two Learning and Behavior Disorder teachers. Auxiliary personnel include one full-time secretary and one part-time assistant secretary, one full-time health clerk, and three custodians.

The teaching staff of School A's is 96% White, 1% Black, 3% Hispanic, 0.4% Asian/Pacific, and 0.0% Native American. Fifteen percent of the teaching staff is male and 85% are female. The average teacher has 15 years of teaching experience. Forty-two percent of the teachers have a Bachelor's Degree and 58% have a Master's Degree or higher. The pupil-teacher ratio is 21:1 and pupil-administration ratio is 348:1. The average teacher salary for 1996-1997 was $47,193. The average administrator salary for 1996-1997 was $77,193. School A spent $6,934 per pupil per year.

In 1997, School A's district adopted a new third grade literature based reading program. The publisher is Houghton/Mifflin, 1996. The program is divided into five unit themes. Supplemental materials include trade books, audiotapes, overhead transparencies, and magazines. Reading and writing are strongly stressed in School A and a wide variety of novels are taught with the basal reading curriculum.

School B:

School B is a suburban K-5 elementary school located in a suburb northwest of a large Mid-west city, with an enrollment of 393 students. It has a large bilingual population. The student population is 34% White, 55% Hispanic, 7% Black, and 4% Asian/Pacific Islander. Forty-nine percent of the students are low-income students with 53% of the students being limited English proficient. Limited English Proficient (LEP) students are those who have been tested and found to be eligible for bilingual education. Low-income students are pupils from families receiving public aid or being supported in foster homes with public funds or eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. The attendance rate at this school is 95%. The student mobility is 29%. The chronic truancy is 0.3%.

The staff of this school includes one principal, one half-time assistant to the principal, sixteen kindergarten through fifth grade teachers, eight of those being bilingual teachers. The staff also includes one reading resource/talented-gifted program teacher, one physical education teacher, one fine arts teacher, a library-media center teacher and three assistants, one primary resource teacher, one special education teacher with four assistants, one part-time social worker, one part-time psychologist, one part-time speech therapist, one at-risk pre-school teacher with one assistant, two part-time Title I Teachers,

and one full-time Title I Teacher with three assistants. Auxiliary personnel include one full-time secretary and one part-time bilingual assistant secretary, one full-time health clerk, and three custodians.

The teaching staff is 71% White, 4% Black, 25% Hispanic, 0% Asian Pacific Islander, and 0% Native Americans. One percent of the teaching staff is male and 99% of the teaching staff is female. The above figures include only those school personnel whose primary responsibility is listed as that of classroom teacher on the state Teacher Service Record File. The average teacher has 15 years of experience. Fifty percent of the teaching staff has a Bachelor's Degree and 50% have a Master's Degree. The pupil-teacher ratio is 23:1 and pupil-administration ratio is 393:1. The average teacher salary for 1996-1997 was $47,239.

In 1996, School B's district adopted a literature based reading program. The publisher is MacMillan/McGraw-Hill, 1997. The program is divided into themes according to the grade level. Each grade level has supplemental material, which includes trade books, audio tapes, and CD ROM disks. The readability of the intermediate program varies in grade level from 3.0 to 6.0.

Title I Reading serves 154 students, along with an extended day kindergarten program. The extended day kindergarten program consists of fifteen children who have been identified as at-risk. Special education resource services 29 children daily. Of those children, 18 have met the formal criterion through testing for placement in this program. The speech therapist has a caseload of 24 students.

The district employs 734 people of which 443 are certified teachers. The class sizes are 23.1 students per teacher. The district owns and operates thirteen schools that

include ten elementary schools and three junior high schools. Current student enrollment is 6,495. School B spends $7,365 per pupil per year.

The superintendent's salary is $118,000. The average administrator salary is $82,529, and the average teacher salary is $48,329. Thirty-four point one percent of the teachers in the district have a Bachelor's Degree, 66% have a Master's Degree or more.

The Surrounding Community

School A

School A is located in the western section of a consolidated school district in the northwest suburbs. The surrounding population consists of approximately 31,780 people. Twenty-six percent of the households earn between $25,000 and $50,000, 45% earn between $50,000 to $100,000, and 15% of the population have an average household income of between $100,00 and $150,000. The communities' population is 84% White, 4% Black, and 7% Asian/Pacific Islander. The age distribution of School A's population range in age: 8 % are aged 5-9, 8% are aged10-are aged 14, 7% are aged 15-19, 6% are aged 20-24, and 41% are aged 25-44, 19% are aged 45. The majority of School A's students come from college educated two parent homes and walk to school. School A encourages community involvement through a variety of activities, which enable parents and community members to participate in school activities. Newsletters are sent home weekly by teachers, and the district sends home newsletters three times a year. School A's district established a Senior Exchange Program in 1992-93 and has grown to 28 senior citizens. The Senior Exchange Program encourages district residents 55 years and older to share their expertise with students and staff. The district reimburses participants for their time.

More than 1,500 community members, parents, staff, and the District Advisory Committee for Educational Excellence helped establish a new course to prepare students for the 21st century. It is called the Strategic Vision 2005 which has developed six goals implemented by each school in the district to help produce world-class learners. School A is proud of their high 1997 IGAP and other standardized test scores.

School B:

School B is part of a consolidated school district located in the northwest suburbs. The occupational composition of the district's population shows a total of 36% in the upper two categories of the United States Census, 1990 (i.e. professional/technical, and management/administration) with 64% of the work force concentrated in the remaining categories. According to the 1990 census, the average family income is $48,863. The average per capita income is $19,262. The communities' population is 92% White, 7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% Hispanic, 0.6% Black. Twenty-nine percent of the adults are high school graduates and 27% are college graduates.

The 1990 census of the community work force reflected a total of 19,167 employed individuals of the total population of 33,429: 3%. Seventy and a half percent of the community is single family housing. Of the available housing, 77% is owner occupied, and 23% is renter occupied (United States Census, 1990). School B is considered a neighborhood school. Many of the apartments are government subsidized under the Section Eight Program. People living in various shelters are often provided apartments in these buildings so that their children can attend School B.

School B's community has changed drastically. According to the 1987 School Report Card the racial ethnic background, low-income, and LEP students have changed. In the 1987 school report card the following statistics were published:

Table 1

School Report Card – 1987

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P. Islander	Native American	Enrollment
School	64%	2%	16%	18%	0.3%	386
District	80%	1%	8%	10%	0.4%	5,430
State	67%	22%	8%	2%	0.1%	1,797,552

In the 1997 school report card the following statistics were published:

Table 2

School Report Card – 1997

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/P. Islander	Native American	Enrollment
School	34%	7%	55%	4%	0.0%	393
District	67%	4%	17%	13%	0.1%	6,495
State	63%	21%	13%	3%	0.1%	1,931,871

In the 1987 school report card the following statistics were published:

Table 3

School Report Card – 1987

	School	District	State
Low – Income	2%	3%	29%
LEP	21%	8%	3%

In the 1997 school report card the following statistics were published:

Table 4

School Report Card –1997

	School	District	State
Low-income	49%	19%	36%
LEP	53%	18%	6%

Over the past ten years, School B has changed from a 2% low-income school to a 49% low-income school. The LEP population has changed from 21% to 53%. The change in the community's population has affected the school population. The exact school population statistics will not be available until the next census in the year 2000.

Regional and National Context of the Problem

The problem of low reading comprehension has had a rippling adverse affect on overall academic achievement for children in the United States, specifically for the children in the above mentioned schools. A growing number of children do not possess

the basic skills and strategies needed for comprehending written material. Changing family and life styles have made an impact on attitudes toward reading and on reading comprehension achievement.

> "Reading, comprehending, and thinking with language and the printed word are cultural phenomena. The extent of their development is affected by home and family circumstances, the encouraging of basic habits and attitudes in kindergarten and the early grades, and opportunities and social support for the development of effective skills and strategies for life" (Anderson, Hubert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985).

According to the National Assessment of Educational Achievement Report (1985) approximately 6% of 9-year-old children are unable to demonstrate rudimentary reading skills. As students get older the reading demands change as tasks become more complex. Basal readers progressively become more difficult through the introduction of new words and ideas, according to Harris and Sipay (1990). Context area textbooks contain new vocabulary in a significantly higher proportion. These increasing demands make reading more difficult for all students especially those with poor reading comprehension.

"Young readers often have difficulty making reasonable inferences about why story characters do the things they do" (Shannon et al., 1988). Shannon et al. found that if character's motives were not stated directly, the 7 to 11 year-olds in their study tended not to be able to answer questions that required them to make inferences.

In 1984, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) declared the United States a "Nation at Risk." The results of this NCEE report concluded that students' test scores were falling while demands from the business community for highly

skilled employees were rising. Low reading comprehension is a recurring problem seen throughout the grade levels. This continuing common thread frequently continues into adult life and negatively affects career success and personal happiness.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

The targeted third grade class of School A and the targeted multiage fourth and fifth grade classrooms of School B were given the S.T.A.R. Test. As seen in Table 5, the Instructional Reading Level (IRL) in School A ranges from pre-primer to grade six. According to Table 5, the IRL in School B ranges from grades one to nine. The IRL is the reading grade level at which the student can recognize words and comprehend material with assistance. The IRL represents the highest level at which the student demonstrates at least 80% proficiency.

Table 5

Reading Instructional Level Pretest Schools A and B

IRL	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
School A Students	0	1	1	10	9	0	3	0	0	0
School B Students	0	4	2	7	9	7	5	0	0	1

Table 5 specifically indicates that less than 1% of the students from School A had an IRL at a pre-primer, first, or second grade level. Seventy-six percent of the students had an IRL at a third and fourth grade level. No students had an IRL at a fifth grade level and only 12% of the students' IRL were at a sixth grade level.

Table 5 indicates that seventeen percent of the students had an IRL at a first and second grade level. Twenty percent of the students had an IRL at the third grade level and twenty-six percent of the students had an IRL at a fourth grade level. Twenty percent had an IRL at the fifth grade level, and fourteen percent had an IRL at a sixth grade level. Zero percent had IRL's at the seventh and eighth grade levels. Only 3% had an IRL at the ninth grade level.

The Grade Equivalent (GE) scores in Table 6 represent how the student performed relative to others in the norming sample. For example, if a student has a GE of 2.2, this student's score is equal to that of a typical second grader in the second month, based on national norms.

Table 6

Grade Equivalent Pretest School A and School B

GE	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
School A Students	0	1	5	10	4	3	0	0	0
School B Students	0	0	2	6	11	12	2	1	1

As shown by Table 6, 26% of the students in School A were reading below a 2.4 reading level, 43% had a GE between 2.5-3.4, and 30% were reading at or above a fourth grade level. Table 6 shows 6% of the students in School B had a GE between 1.5-2.4. Seventeen percent had a GE of 2.5-3.4, 65% had a GE between 3.5-5.4, 6% had a GE of 5.5-6.4, and 6% had a GE of 6.5-8.4.

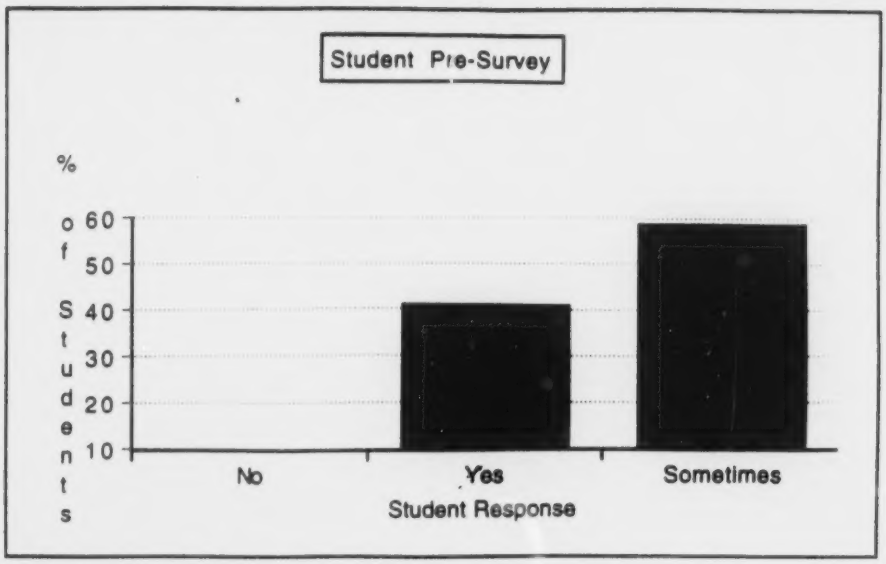

Figure1 Question 1-Do you read at home?- School A

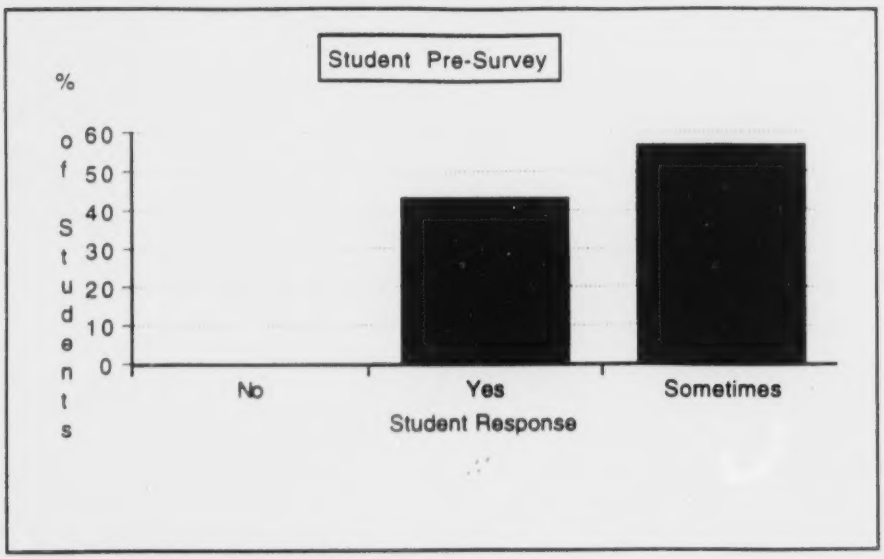

Figure 2 Question 1-Do you read at home?- School B

The students at Schools A and B were given a survey regarding their attitudes and insights about reading. Figures 1 and 2 indicate that the students who said they sometimes read at home were higher than those students who said they read at home regularly. No students responded that reading did not take place at home.

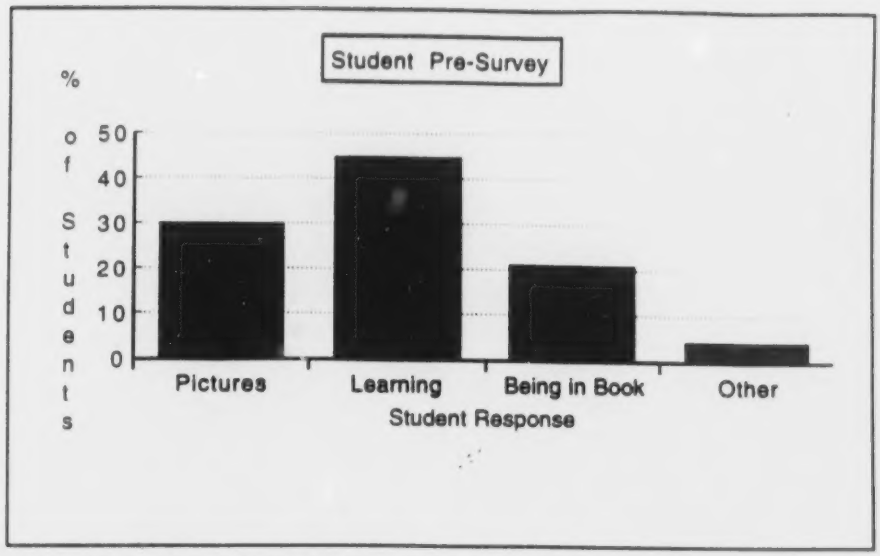

Figure 3 Question 3 - What is the best part of reading?- School A

Figure 3 indicates that 30% of the students at School A enjoyed looking at the pictures in books. Forty-four percent of the students felt that they enjoyed learning things while reading. Twenty-one percent of the students enjoyed reading because they felt like they were the characters in the book. Five percent of the students gave various other reasons for reading.

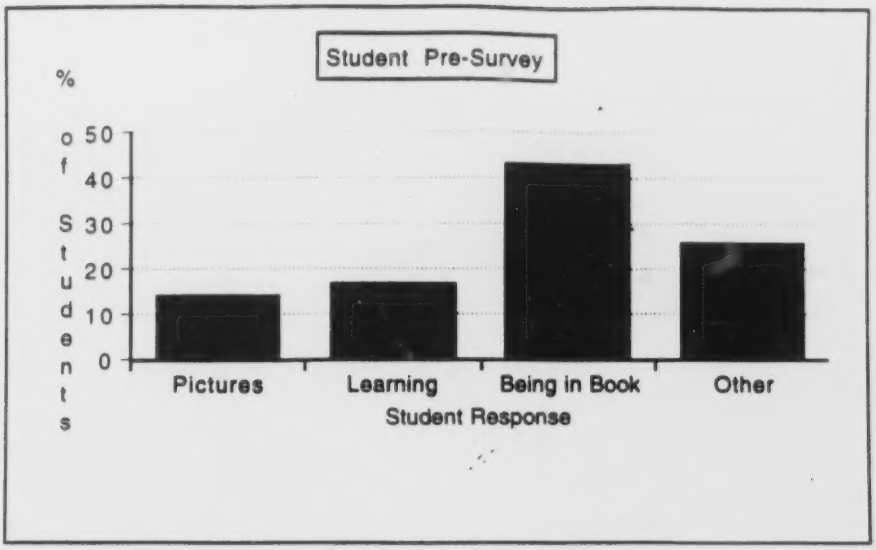

Figure 4 Question 3-What is the best part of reading?- School B

Figure 4 indicates that 14% of the students at School B enjoyed looking at the pictures in books. Eighteen percent of the students felt that they enjoyed learning things while reading. Forty-two percent of the students enjoyed reading because they felt like they were the characters in the book. Twenty-six percent of the students gave various other reasons for reading.

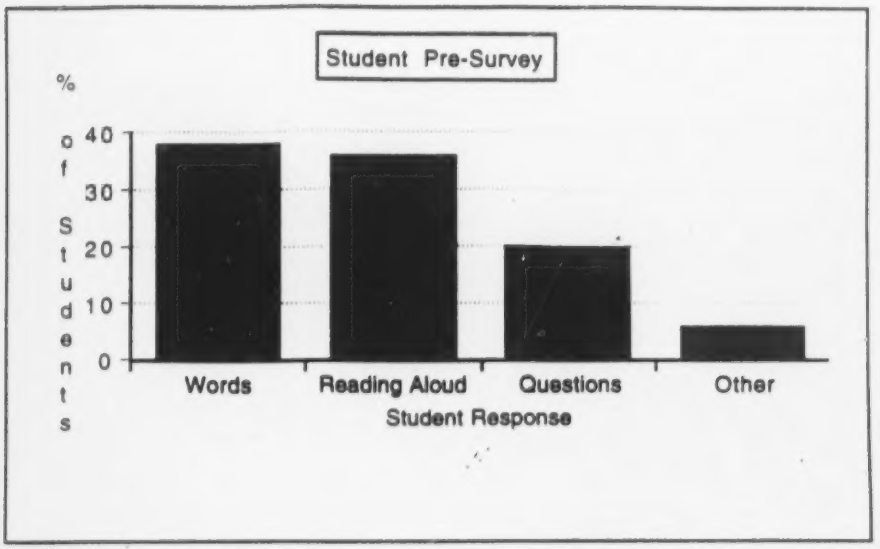

Figure 5 Question 4-What is the hardest part of reading?- School A

Figure 5 indicates that 38% of the students at School A felt that reading words that they did not already recognize was the hardest part of reading. Thirty-six percent of the students felt that reading aloud was difficult. Twenty percent of the students responded that answering questions was difficult. Six percent of the student responses fell into the category of other reasons.

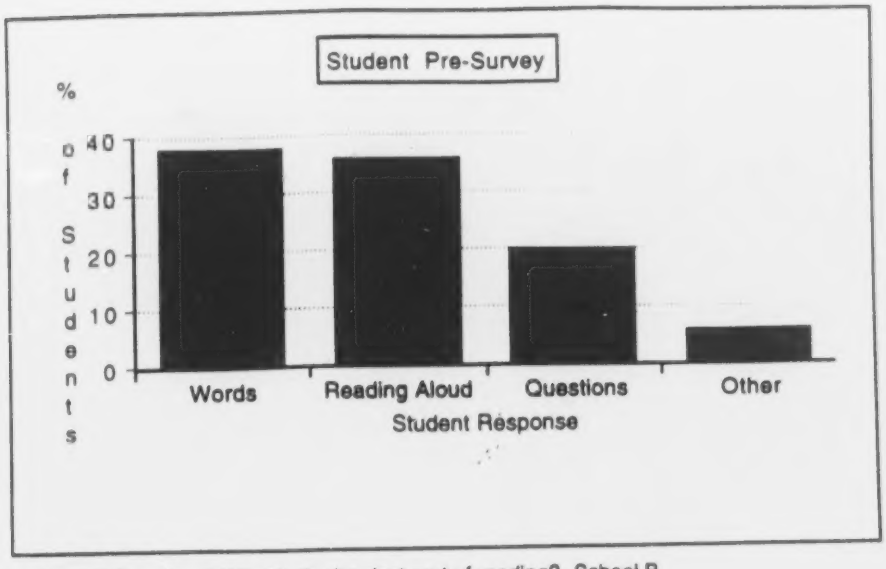

Figure 6 Question 4-What is the hardest part of reading?- School B

Figure 6 indicates that 38% of the students at School B felt that reading words that they did not already recognize was the hardest part of reading. Thirty-seven percent of the students felt that reading aloud was difficult. Twenty percent of the students responded that answering questions was difficult. Five percent of the student responses fell into the category of other reasons.

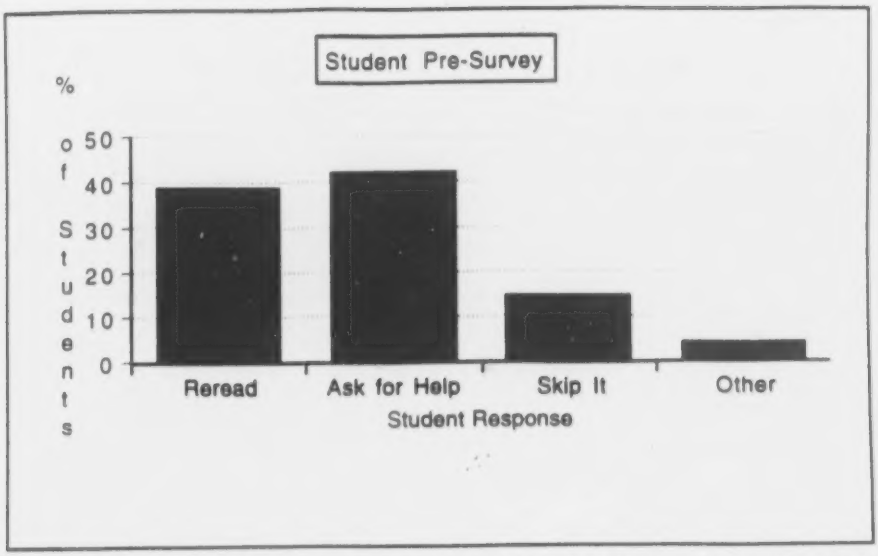

Figure 7 Question 5-What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?- School A

Figure 7 indicates that 39% of students at School A reread passages when they read something that they did not understand. Forty-two percent of the students ask for help when they did not understand what they read. Fifteen percent of the students responded that they skipped the parts that they did not understand, and 4% responded that they did other things to help themselves understand.

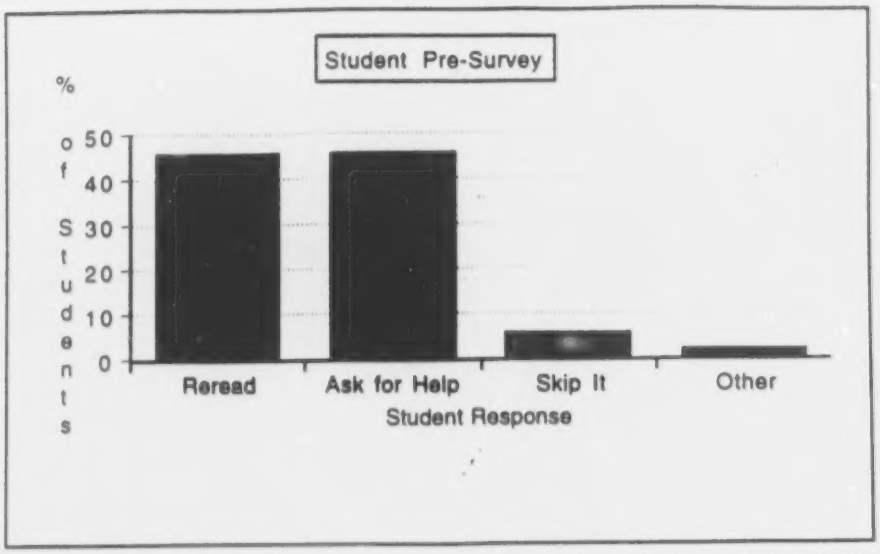

Figure 8 Question 5-What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?- School B

Figure 8 indicates that 46% of students at School B reread passages when they read something that they did not understand. Forty-seven percent of the students ask for help when they did not understand what they read. Five percent of the students responded that they skipped the parts that they did not understand, and 2% responded that they did other things to help themselves understand.

Probable Causes

Analysis of probable cause data indicates that students exhibit low literal and inferential reading comprehension skills. These limited skills hinder academic achievement because of low self-esteem and lack of intrinsic motivation, poor word recognition skills, limited vocabularies, a lack of activating prior knowledge, limited life experiences, and a deficiency in understanding and implementing literal and inferential thinking. Evidence of these probable causes was found in research literature and at the targeted sites.

Both Parents Work

The first probable cause is both parents work. A majority of students in School A and B come from households where both parents work. As a result of long hours spent working, commuting, family obligations, and going to sport practices families have less time to spend with their children. Due to the complexity of homework in the intermediate grades, children are spending most of their time completing classroom assignments, rather than reading for enjoyment.

State Mandated Testing and Curriculum

The second probable cause is state mandated curriculum changes and testing. As a result of the need to cover as much curriculum as possible before standardized testing, some children are not given the time they need to process new reading skills in order to transfer knowledge. Many students feel the need to complete assignments quickly; therefore, they have many errors and do not understand the building block process of new

concepts. Students miss key concepts because they do not see the connection between the new information being taught and their own prior knowledge.

Two Language Homes

The third probable cause is two language homes. The number of students from two language homes in School B has grown from 9% in 1980 to 59% in 1997. The district percentage is 30, and the state percentage is 16. School B has a 53 percent population of LEP students. The district percentage is 18, and the state percentage is 6. School B has a 49 percent population of low-income students. The district percentage is 19, and the state percentage is 36. The students' mobility rate is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year. The student mobility rate at School B is 29%. The district percentage is 19, and the state percentage is 18. The above percentages are from the 1997 School State Report Card.

The above mentioned percentages suggest that School B has a large group of bilingual students within the school population. A high percentage of the schools' population is considered low income and/or LEP. School B has the highest Title I population in the district.

According to Schmidt (1995), bilingual ethnic minority children often have differences in their home culture other than that of their school culture. Cultural conflict often occurs and literacy learning may be negatively affected (Trueba, Jacobs, and Kirton, 1990). Sometimes, LEP or low-income families have different viewpoints regarding the school and home connection. There is evidence that a positive parental involvement can make a difference in children's reading success.

Students who come from homes where parent literacy skills are minimal, and who have limited life experiences may have much more difficulty learning to read. These students may not have been read to at home or exposed to fluent readers. These students have had fewer chances to read and comprehend text, or the materials that they read are too challenging for them (Allington, 1983a; Nathan and Stanovich, 1991).

According to Purcell-Gates and Dahl (1991) literacy problems account for much of the difficulties of at-risk learners. These students may have problems because of their limited background knowledge, limited vocabulary, and difficulty understanding abstract concepts (Palincsar, David, Winn, and Stevens, 1991). Similarly, Schools A and B have noted through teacher observation and reading comprehension assessments that the above information validates reading comprehension problems in the targeted classrooms.

Poor Motivation

The fourth probable cause is poor motivation. Teacher researchers have observed that students with poor reading and comprehension skills often exhibit low self-esteem and a lack of intrinsic motivation. This results from repeated failures in reading grade level material that is above their reading level. According to Robert Sylwester (1995), the lowering of self-esteem reduces the brain's level of the vital neurotransmitter called serotonin, which is a chemical that helps to regulate one's emotional state, i.e. motivation. Without sufficient positive feedback, a person's self-esteem and consequently their general mental activity and emotional control may suffer considerably. Students in targeted Schools A and B often lack parental modeling of reading. The majority of these students spend little of their free time reading, and are not motivated to read. Epstein writes, "The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and

interest at home, and parental participation in schools and classrooms positively influence achievement even after the students' abilities and family socioeconomic status are taken into account" (Epstein, 1986).

Teaching reading in the 1990's is more difficult than teaching reading in previous decades. The focus of educating children has shifted more to the schools as opposed to being shared by the home and school. There are more homes with two working parents than previous decades. Consequently, children are left without adult supervision. Television, video, and computer games are often home entertainment. The quick media pace is what children are accustomed to, thus teachers have to compete.

Teachers must use persuasive techniques to entice students away from technology to pursue reading for pleasure (Avery & Avery, 1994). According to U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard W. Riley, "Too many students are spending too little time reading and too much time watching mind-numbing television. We need to emphasize basic reading skills while building on fundamentals to enhance comprehension, critical, and analytical skills." This is based on the results of the National Assessment of Education Progress Reading Report Card (American School Board Journal, 1995). Motivation plays a critical role in reading comprehension both literally and inferentially.

Poor Word Recognition Skills

The fifth probable cause is poor word recognition skills. One of the stumbling blocks to successful reading comprehension is word recognition. Word recognition is defined as words that students can recognize, pronounce, and understand instantly. Students are spending too much time and effort decoding words in text. According to LaBerge and Samuels (1974), the brain has a limited attention capacity; so to

comprehend what is read, individuals must be able to decode words both accurately and automatically.

Limited Vocabulary

The sixth probable cause is a limited vocabulary. Teacher researchers at Schools A and B have observed that students who struggle over basic sight and grade level vocabulary words often lose key ideas and lack the ability to make inferences as they read. According to Carr; Dahl and Samuels; and Hansen and Pearson, (as cited in May, 1998) there is no real reading without inferences.

"Current research on learning indicates that good learners make connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge and in the process, construct their own meanings" (Anderson, 1984, p. 634). Activating prior knowledge establishes a foundation in which a student can build a relationship with the author and story. Teacher researchers have observed that most students with poor reading comprehension skills do not take the time to tap into and trust their prior knowledge. Therefore, they do not activate their thinking about the printed text, resulting in few connections.

Limited Life Experiences

The seventh probable cause is limited life experiences. Teacher researchers have found students frequently have limited life experiences because of a lower socioeconomic level, single family homes, high divorce rate, and maternal employment (The Education Digest, 1995). Parents are busy working and have less time to take their children on outings. Family outings provide background to a variety of experiences. Children have less first hand experiences because their parents are working, making family outing time unavailable. Therefore, many students are experiencing life through computers and

television. These vicarious experiences can suggest a one-dimensional experience; therefore, the students are not immersed in the reality of the true activity.

Deficiency in Communication

The eighth probable cause is communicating thoughts. Reading is thinking and communicating. The origin of the word comprehension helps to explain the meaning of reading comprehension. *Com* in Latin means "with, together, or jointly," and *prehendere* means " to grasp or seize." Therefore, comprehend means to grasp an idea, and reading comprehension means to grasp ideas from written text. According to May (1998),

> Reading is not simply devouring words held loosely like popcorn on a string. It's allowing the words to stimulate and stir up a brew of your own memories. It's letting you interact with the author by thinking about past experiences. In other words, reading is hitting the ball back to your communication partner, the writer. (p.82)

Literal comprehension is the meaning that the reader gets from the printed words in the text. One reads the words that the author has written and formulates an answer from those words.

Inferential comprehension is what the reader infers from what the author writes. In inferential comprehension, the reader has to read to draw conclusions from the material presented. The author leaves out elements that the reader must infer by reading between the lines. "Inference is the heart of the comprehension process" (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, and Duffy, (1990, p.14). This reading strategy is often taught in isolation. Ideally, the strategy of thinking inferentially should be interwoven with teaching reading comprehension skills. "Despite the persistent conventional wisdom that implicitly argues

for delaying giving children inferential activities until they have mastered literal comprehension, both basic and applied research in reading clearly support a strong emphasis on inferential activities from the outset of instruction" (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, and Duffy, (1990, p. 14). Current teaching methods of inferential thinking is briefly introduced at the elementary level. Teachers are not providing the tools or the experiences to enable their students to develop a deeper level of inferential thinking, which could assist them in interpreting and appreciating printed literature.

In conclusion, the teacher researchers attributed the following probable causes, for low literal and inferential reading comprehension. First, families spend less time with their families due to working, commuting, and other obligations. Second, the targeted third and multiage fourth/fifth grade students have less time for reading for enjoyment because of more complex homework. Third, due to the ever-changing state mandated curriculum changes, teachers are presenting new skills in less time. Therefore, students are rushing to complete assignments without truly understanding the new concepts. Fourth, the high percentages of bilingual, LEP, and at-risk learners have created literacy problems. Finally, probable causes found in literature were low self-esteem and lack of intrinsic motivation, poor word recognition skills, limited vocabularies, a lack of activating prior knowledge, limited life experiences, and a deficiency in understanding and implementing literal and inferential thinking.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

One of our goals as teachers is to instill the love of reading in our students. A teacher can "hype" various books so that the students will read them, however, the real goal is for students to develop a love for printed text. Students usually need to be motivated to read.

However, not all students want to read. It has been recorded by Neuman (1986) that children read more when they see other people reading, both at school and at home. Neuman reported that children, whose parents do more leisure reading, read more than children whose parents show less interest in books. Although these parents might do other things that promote reading, these results indicate that having a model is important. Greaney and Hegarty (1987) found that 73% of the parents of "heavy-readers" in the fifth grade encourage their children to read specific books as compared to 44% of the parents of nonreaders.

Jeannette Veatch developed the Personalized Literature Program (PLP) in the 1950's. She believed that students were curious and wanted to learn. Veatch had read articles written by Willard C. Olson, a child development specialist. Olson felt that children learned best when they were motivated. Often times this motivation comes when children are given opportunities to select their own stimuli and explore or learn at their own individual pace. Veatch felt that Olson's ideas could be transferred to reading.

Ideally, in SSR students should choose the books that they want to read, as do adults. Students will more readily want to read what they have selected. The same is true when students are participating in Literature Circles in which they have self-selected

their books. This self-selection of books is one aspect of empowering students to read and lead their own discussions.

Recent research conducted in a variety of educational settings helps to answer the question: how do we create learning environments that will motivate children to read? Reading research of the 1990's has begun to focus on the power of children's choice.

> One of the most consistent themes in our interviews with children was the power of choice. When children told us about books they "most enjoyed" reading, more than 80% spoke of books they had selected themselves from the classroom library. Only 10% discussed books that had been assigned to them. A strong correlation appears to exist between choice and the development of intrinsic motivation. Research also suggests that opportunities for self-selection promote students' independence and versatility as readers. Students who engage in frequent discussions about their reading are more motivated and have higher reading achievement scores than students who do not. In addition, social interaction about books and stories appears to foster wide, frequent reading (Gambrell, 1997, p.4).

To motivate students to read and enhance their vocabulary, teachers should read aloud to their students. Students build a much larger vocabulary if they are read to frequently, either at home or at school. Jennings (1990) commented that you couldn't afford not to read aloud. New words can be introduced and explained in the context of the story. The teacher read aloud environment is a relaxed setting. According to Ostrander, Schroeder, and Ostrander (1975) reading aloud to children in a relaxed setting promotes student interest and involvement while connecting new knowledge to old.

Maher (1991) confirms that reading aloud to older children works as well as reading aloud to younger children.

Much information has been written about the importance of prior knowledge and past experiences in literal and inferential reading comprehension. Current research on learning indicates that good readers make connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge and in the process, construct their own meanings (Anderson, 1984). Strategies that facilitate the construction of meaning therefore improve reading. The K-W-L Strategy is designed in a three column format, which requires students first to write what they already know about a topic (calling attention to prior knowledge); second to write what they would like to know about a topic (tapping student interest and providing purpose for reading); and third, after reading and class discussion, to write what they learned and would still like to learn (making connections between questions asked and information encountered).

According to Carr and Ogle (1987) the K-W-L Chart requires students to make connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge, thereby constructing meaning. Donna Ogle (1986) developed a teaching approach that gets young readers even closer to independent reading comprehension. It also validates nonfiction as an important form of literature. To comprehend a topic that a student is reading about, the student must actively and continually access what they already know about the topic.

Students might have little or no prior knowledge about curriculum topics. Therefore, brainstorming with the entire class is critical to access prior knowledge. Group brainstorming can also be done when asking what students want to learn. However, each student should write down what he/she wants to learn.

Teacher Thomas Mandeville (1994) suggested a fourth column in the K-W-L Chart. The chart is called a K-W-L-A Chart. This last column could provide opportunities for students to express their values, feelings, and aesthetic appreciations. Another teacher, Patricia McAllister (1994) kept a record of the quality and quantity of student responses as a kind of informal assessment.

Reading is making sense out of what the author is telling you. Reading is communicating with a writer through predicting and checking (Goodman, 1986). More capable readers predict, check, change their predictions, and check again. Predicting and checking depend on the context and enables the reader to interact with the author. As one college senior said in a reading study, "You shouldn't read a book just as something printed and distant from you, but as real experience of someone who went through some sort of situation" (Belenky et al., 1986, p.113).

According to a study on effective readers making predictions, Muna Beebe (1980) reported children who score high on reading comprehension tests tended to be more willing to risk making mistakes while predicting. The goal of education is to enable and inspire students to continue learning on their own. One strategy that encourages students to become risk takers is the use of "patterned literature" or predictable text. This kind of text is easy to read and enables fluent reading in a first grader or an ineffective intermediate reader. Predictable literature is being used more and more in the first two grades and for older remedial readers. Using the patterned books is also a good way to teach sight words (Bridge, Maley, & Winograd, 1983).

Bridge (1979) was one of the first researchers to find that predictable books tend to increase children's success more rapidly than basal anthologies. McCormick and Mason

(1986) found that when predictable stories were given to an experimental group of children, these children scored significantly higher than the control group of children on three variables: story reading, word reading, and spelling.

Research shows that fluency increases when students read easy books. Jay Samuels (1998) notes that young or ineffective older readers can best develop fluency by reading many easy books. They become more fluent in "contextual"reading. They learn to pay attention to context clues that enable them to predict the author's ideas or story.

Teacher researchers saw a need to help students think inferentially. Students need to realize that authors often write with hidden meanings in written text. The student needs to be taught how to infer what the author means.

A strategy used to teach inferential thinking has been called the "Directed Reading Thinking Activity" (DRTA), by Stauffer (1975). The DRTA is a guided reading strategy that promotes predicting, checking, and verifying. In this strategy, the teacher uses a discussion process as a teaching method, which turns a comprehension strategy into a strategy that students can use on their own when reading.

In the method of guided student reading, students are first asked to predict what each page or two is going to be about. Second, they're directed to read silently to check their predictions. Third, they're asked to prove their interpretations of what the author said. The DRTA questions are: "What do you think? Why do you think so? Can you prove it?" Several studies have shown that the DRTA method results in higher levels of comprehension than methods that only test the student's memory at the end of their reading (Stauffer, 1975). A possible reason for the DRTA success might be that it

recognizes the differences in student's thinking. Different students will give different answers to the same questions, depending on their point of view.

Another strategy to improve comprehension is called the Question Answer Relationship (QAR) Strategy. The four types of questions that are introduced are Right There, Think and Search, Author and Me, and On My Own. A "Right There" question is a literal question in which the answer is found in one place on one page in the text. In a "Think and Search" question the students must look at different paragraphs and/or different pages to find an answer. In an "Author and Me" question the students put pieces of the text and their own experiences together to find the answer. In an "On My Own" question, the students ask and answer their own questions based on the main topic of the text.

Teaching students to ask questions about a story is another strategy to teach students to use while they read. These self-monitoring questions should be asked by students before, during, and after a story is read. Marshall (1984) and Sadow (1982) suggested five types of questions that teachers should introduce and model with their students. The first type of question involves characters. The students should ask themselves: What kind of person is the character and why? What prompted the character's actions? The second type of question involves the setting of the text. Where does the story take place? When does it take place? What would happen to the character if the setting changes? The third type of question involves the conflict in the story. What problem does the character face? What caused the problem? How do you think the character will solve the problem? The fourth type of question involves the possible resolution of the problem. What did the character do first about the problem? What do you think the character will do next?

Why wasn't the first attempt successful? The last type of question involves the resolution. How was the problem finally solved? How does the character feel about it being solved? What are some other possible solutions? What will the character do now that the problem is solved?

Nolte and Singer (1985) carried on an action research study on self-monitoring questions. The purpose of the research was to see if training students to ask their own story questions would result in better comprehension, than a group of students who did not get this training. The experimental group's average score was higher than the control group's score. The action research experiment had a two-fold gain: the students learned to ask their own questions, and their comprehension increased considerably. Mahn (1985) found that students could successfully use the self-questioning strategy while reading textbooks and other expository texts. The teacher modeled the questioning technique, and then the students learned to write, ask, and find the answer to their own questions. The students found the answers: (1) from the author's words, (2) from making inferences, and (3) from their own experiences.

Another strategy that helps improve reading comprehension is the Literature Circle. The Literature Circle is like a "Great Books Discussion Group." Knoeller (1994) found that 90% of the students in his study, felt comfortable to both participate, and lead discussions in the Literature Circle. Knoeller noted that teacher led discussions had a lower student participation rate. Literature Circles do not require a student to be a fast reader and are comprised of heterogeneous readers. Students in the groups have jobs to perform, so that the book discussion can take place. According to Scott (1995) students are taught to be attentive listeners, so that they can actively participate in conversations

and piggyback on others' thoughts. Hopefully, connections and reflections are being made as opposed to simply giving a summary of a book.

Mandler and Johnson (1977) started story grammar research during the 1970's. Most teachers have students fill in graphic organizers or charts with information about various literary elements, i.e., main characters, settings, problems, outcomes, etc.

> Using story mapping, also known as graphic organizers, is a strategy, which particularly assists noninvolved readers to "deep process" the information. "Deep process" means that the students are encouraged, orally and in writing, to think deeply about and respond to the ideas in the text. Semantic mapping also known as webbing, networking, clustering, idea mapping and concept branching is a strategy that shows students how ideas and information in a specific unit of text are related and organized. When a map is completed, students can see how major ideas are related to subordinate ideas and how subordinate ideas contain factual information (Pizzo & Sinatra, 1992, p.103).

The teacher researchers believe that story-mapping forms are visual blue prints of the written text; there are numerous forms from which to choose. No matter what form is used; the goal is for students to take the necessary information from the text and have it visually organized. Hopefully, this will help students to retain and transfer learning across the curriculum. Story Maps, to be the most beneficial, must be specific to show how ideas are related in an organized way.

> Story Maps engage the class in an integrated language arts approach in developing a content unit. Teachers can use listening, speaking, reading, and writing (a whole

language framework), rather than a question and answer format, to help students deep process and elaborate on text ideas (Pizzo & Sinatra, 1992, p.103).

"A Character Perspective Chart (CPC) is an instructional technique that fosters story understanding" (Shanahan & Shanahan, 1997, p. 668). CPC is a story map that presents the story from the viewpoints of two or more characters. It takes into account the character's personal conflicts. It makes the reader aware of the themes and structure of the story. You get a more in-depth understanding of a story when the reader becomes aware of the different viewpoints of different characters.

In conclusion, the teacher researchers found many solutions in literature to the problems of the lack of intrinsic motivation to read and to a lower literal and inferential reading comprehension level. The solution components found in literature are in-classroom reading incentive programs using self-selected books, the instruction of reading comprehension strategies, i.e., prior knowledge, predicting and inferencing, DRTA, Story Mapping (graphic organizers), QAR, Self-Monitoring Questions, and Literary Circles.

Project Outcomes and Solutions

How can we as teacher researchers improve both the literal and inferential reading comprehension skills, so that the targeted third and multiage fourth/fifth grade students will not be hindered academically? In addition, how can the teacher researchers encourage the targeted students to become more intrinsically motivated to read for enjoyment?

As a result of incorporating the instruction of reading comprehension strategies, and various reading incentive programs, during the period of September, 1998 to January,

1999, the third and multiage fourth/fifth graders from the targeted classes will improve their literal and inferential comprehension skills and become more intrinsically motivated to read for enjoyment as measured by teacher observations, surveys, and the S.T.A.R. Test.

In order for the project objectives to be accomplished, the following process objectives are necessary:

1. Develop student surveys.
2. Obtain appropriate pre and post-tests (S.T.A.R.).
3. Develop learning activities and assessments that address literal and inferential comprehension strategies.
4. Revise classroom schedule to include daily SSR time.
5. Obtain appropriate Spotlight books from reading series for Literary Circles.

Action Plan

The first solution that the teacher researchers have chosen to use is reading incentive programs to help build intrinsic motivation in the targeted students. The second solution that the teacher researchers have chosen to use to help improve literal and inferential comprehension of the targeted students is the teaching, modeling, and application of various reading comprehension strategies.

First, the researchers will provide time for the students to share their prior knowledge with the entire class. Time will be provided for K-W-L Charts to be developed. Second, researchers will encourage students to make predictions and inferences before and during the reading of books. Third, the researchers will use the Accelerated Reader Program and in-classroom incentive programs as part of their SSR. Fourth, the researchers will teach the DRTA, the effective use of graphic organizers (story maps), and QAR reading

strategies. Fifth, the researchers will teach the students to use in-depth self-monitoring questions, and finally, they will provide training and participation in Literary Circles to increase literal and inferential thinking.

Action Plan Outline

Weeks One / Two

1. Establish base line data using:
    - S.T.A.R. Test
    - Student Surveys (Appendix A)

    During weeks one and two the teacher researchers administered the S.T.A.R. test to establish the IRL (Instructional Reading Level) and GE (Grade Equivalent). Student surveys were given to document the overall attitude towards reading by students.

2. Teacher read aloud
    - Focus on prediction and introduce inferencing
    - Use pattern / predictable stories (fairy tales, etc...)

    Teacher researchers read aloud to students for five to ten minutes daily. Various prediction opportunities were provided at this time. Pattern or predictable stories such as fairy tales were used as teacher read aloud materials. These types of stories were used to specifically engage all students, even reluctant readers, to predict.

Week Three

1. Implement

   - Accelerated Reading/ SSR
   - Reading Chart / Folder

The teacher researchers introduced the Accelerated Reading Program. In the program students choose their own books, and read them at their own pace. When finished reading the book, the students take a short, objective quiz on the computer. The computer reveals how many questions he or she answers correctly. The quiz results assure the teacher that the student has read the book. Both the student and teacher receive reports on the students' reading progress. Reading points, based on the book's length, reading level, and number of correct answers, offer an objective measure of reading practice. If the student receives an 80% or higher competency on the comprehension test, the student receives the designated numeric point value printed on the book. The points can be saved and/or spent on various gifts. SSR (Sustained Silent Reading--in which the entire class reads silently) was introduced in School A. SSR (Self-Selected Reading) was introduced in School B. Although both programs are titled identically, they are implemented differently. Accelerated Reading Books were read at SSR time. The teacher researchers have designed a reading record chart so that the students can enter the number of minutes read nightly. Various incentives are used to motivate student reading, and one incentive is "lunch with the teacher." Once a month, those students who have read two books, qualify to eat lunch and have a special dessert with the teacher.

2. Targeted researchers had the class brainstorm their prior knowledge about the various teacher read aloud books.(Appendix B)
3. Teacher read aloud: prediction / inference (Appendix C)
    - Teacher made riddles (science, social studies, etc…)

Teachers made up riddles to share with students. These riddles were used to start teaching inferencing to students.

Week Four

1. Accelerated Reading/ SSR
2. Reading Chart / Folder
3. Continue Prior Knowledge
4. Teacher read aloud – prediction
    - During read aloud time, the targeted researchers taught the primary strategy of making inferences through the use of basic self-monitoring questions.
    - Draw a picture of how the character felt:
        A. What do you think?
        B. Why do you think this?
        C. Can you prove it?
    - Inference / riddles
    - Predict / read to confirm/ prove interpretation with questions
5. Directed Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a prediction activity which motivates the children to attend very closely to the details in a story. (Appendix D)
    - Choose an unfamiliar story that has lots of action.
    - Break the story into three or four episodes.
    - Read the title to the students.

- Ask: What do you think the story is going to be about?
- The students jot down their predictions and share orally.
- They then read the first sentence only.
- Ask: Was your prediction correct? How do you know? Exactly what confirmed or refuted your prediction? What do you think the story is going to be about now? What do you think will happen next?
- The students again jot down their predictions and share orally.
- They read to the end of an episode. Repeat the two preceding steps.
- Continue like this until the story is read.
- Discuss the relative merits of the original story and the children's predictions.

Week Five

1. Continue week four intervention

Week Six

1. Continue week four intervention

Week Seven

1. Accelerated Reading/ SSR
2. Reading Chart / Folder
3. Teacher read aloud
    - Prior knowledge
    - Inferences
    - DRTA
    - Graphic organizers (Appendices E, F, G, H, I, J)

Various graphic organizers were introduced to the students. The ultimate goal of using the maps is for the students to see how ideas are related. These graphic organizers provide a visual blue print of the written text. The students are to take information from the text and have it visually organized.

4. Introduce QAR Strategy (Question, Answer, Relationship) (Appendix K)
    - Right There Questions
    - The answer to a Right There Question is found in one sentence in one place in the text.
    - Think & Search
    - The answer to a Think and Search Question is in the story but the information is found in more than one sentence and in more than one place in the text.
    - Author & Me
    - The answer to an Author and Me Question is in the students' own knowledge plus the information from the story combined.
    - On My Own
    - The answer to an On My Own Question is in the students' own knowledge and thoughts on the general subject of the story.
5. Focus on Right There Questions (literal reading intervention)

Week Eight

1. Continue week seven intervention
2. QAR Right There questions
    - Think & Search

Week Nine

1. Continue week eight intervention

Week Ten

1. Continue week eight intervention
2. QAR
    - Right There Questions
    - Think & Search
    - Author & Me

Week Eleven

1. Continue week eight intervention
2. QAR
    - Right There Questions
    - Think & Search
    - Author & Me
    - On My Own
3. Self-Monitoring Questions (Appendix L)

Week Twelve

1. Accelerated Reading/ SSR
2. Introduce and model Literary Circle Jobs (Appendices M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T)
    - On Monday introduce and model the Discussion Director Job
    - On Tuesday introduce and model the Character Analyst Job
    - On Wednesday introduce and model the Plot Puzzler Job
    - On Thursday introduce and model Summary Statesman Job

- On Friday introduce and model the Connector Job.

Week Thirteen

1. Accelerated Reading/ SSR
2. Implementation of Literary Circles
    - The students will be divided into groups according to their reading interests. Literature Circle jobs are assigned and other groups evaluate the presenting group.

Week Fourteen

1. Accelerated Reading/ SSR
2. Continue Literary Circles

Weeks Fifteen/ Sixteen

1. Accelerated Reading/ SSR
2. Post-test evaluation:
    - S.T.A.R. Test
    - Student Post-Survey

Methods of Assessments

In order to assess the effects of the interventions, the S.T.A.R. Test was re-administered to the targeted classrooms as well as student post-surveys. In addition, teacher observations will be reviewed. The S.T.A.R. Test is a criterion-referenced and norm referenced test. A criterion-referenced test measures student performance against a fixed, unchanging criterion such as a standard. A norm-referenced test measures student performance against other students who have taken the test. The S.T.A.R. Test provides four scores. The Grade Equivalent score represents how the student performed relative to

the norm sample. The Instructional Reading Level is a reading grade at which the student can recognize words and comprehend material with assistance. It represents the highest level at which the student demonstrated at least 80% proficiency. The Normal Curve Equivalent is used predominantly for research purposes, or for Title I, and other governmental evaluations. These scores are derived from percentile ranks and can be statistically averaged. The Percentile Rank shows how a student's performance compared to that of his/her grade peers nationally. The teacher researchers will use the Grade Equivalent and the Instructional Reading Level scores to analyze the targeted student's growth. The pre and post surveys administered to the targeted students will indicate whether the intrinsic motivation level of students has increased. Teacher observation logs will provide another means of assessing student literal and inferential reading comprehension and intrinsic motivation.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve students' literal and inferential reading comprehension and to motivate the students to want to read for enjoyment. Direct teaching of various strategies to help students access prior knowledge, predict and make inferences before reading were interventions to help improve their reading skills. Other strategies such as DRTA (Appendix D), using various graphic organizers (Appendices B, C, E, F, G, H, I, J), QAR (Appendix K), and in-depth Self-Monitoring Questions (Appendix L) were taught to help increase students' literal and inferential reading skills. Students were exposed to different types of literature to teach them how and when to vary their reading rate to fit the purpose of reading. Literary Circles (Appendices M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, and T) were introduced to promote group discussions of books. The teacher researchers at Schools A and B taught reading five days a week for a block of 60 to 90 minutes per day to the entire class.

The first phase of the action plan at Schools A and B was to collect data using the S.T.A.R. Test to document the Instructional Reading Level and The Grade Equivalents of the targeted students. Students were asked to fill out an attitudinal survey (Appendix A) about reading. The teacher researchers tallied and graphed the data results.

At the beginning of the school year, the teacher researchers at Schools A and B read aloud to their students as an introductory intrinsic motivational building activity using patterned and predictable stories. Teacher read aloud was incorporated into the schedule for ten minutes daily. While reading aloud, the teacher researchers focused on making predictions, and classroom brainstorming of prior knowledge helped reluctant readers to engage in making predictions. Predicting techniques were introduced as the teachers read predictable stories to the students. After two days of making predictions, the researchers introduced the intervention of inferential reading. The context of the predictable story served as clues for building inferential reading comprehension. The next week the researchers combined both predicting and making inferences as part of the daily read aloud. Schools A and B used fairy tales such as The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, and Jack and the Beanstalk.

For example, while reading Jack and the Beanstalk, the teacher researchers asked their students to draw a picture of the expression on Jack's mother's face when Jack came home with the magic beans. Then the teacher researchers asked the class why they thought the mother felt that way. The next question asked was "Can you prove it?" Students must go back into the book and find the location of the words that verified their answer. Drawing was a primary introduction to DRTA at Schools A and B.

The teacher researchers started with three basic self-monitoring questions with the intent of moving to a more in-depth type of self-monitoring questions. School A's researcher used fictional genre appropriate for third grade. The teacher researchers at School B chose an unfamiliar action filled story from the basal text, and they broke it into three or four episodes. The students were asked to predict what they thought the story

would be about after only reading the title. The class discussed the predictions and read the first sentence. They were asked if they were correct in their initial prediction. The class was then directed to make another prediction about the first episode of the story.

Then they read to the end of the designated first episode and was asked if their prediction was correct. The teacher researchers asked: "Was your prediction correct?" "How do you know?" "What confirmed or refuted your prediction?" "What do you think the story will be about now?" "What will happen next?" The students read to the end of the next episode and continued the same procedure until the story was entirely read.

During the third week of school, the Accelerated Reading Program and SSR was incorporated. The students at Schools A and B were given teacher made reading charts. The format of the reading log consisted of listing the title of the book, how many minutes read, date read, and parent signature to be used on a daily basis. The Sustained Silent Reading Program at School A consisted of reading thirty minutes daily, four times a week. During the SSR time, students read an Accelerated Reader book of their choice quietly anywhere in the room, while the teacher also read a book. The students in School A were encouraged to read in a comfortable place in the room, sharing classroom pillows, and eating a healthy snack. Self-Selected Reading at School B consisted of twenty minutes of reading five days per week. At this time, the students were given the opportunity to pair read, to read alone, work on a book project, conference with their teacher about the book they were reading, or students could discuss their book with other students.

Teacher researchers at Schools A and B brainstormed the students' prior knowledge when starting new lessons. This pre-reading intervention proved to be extremely valuable for all students, especially for those students with limited experiences.

Different types of texts at Schools A and B were used to provide reasons for reading and for students to understand that rates of reading need to be varied to fit the reason for reading. Fiction stories and non-fiction stories were used. Students learned to read fiction material faster than non-fiction material. The teacher researchers created riddles in content subjects to enable students to predict and make inferences.

In the fourth week, students at Schools A and B continued to keep daily reading logs, as well as, doing Accelerated Reading and SSR. Students continued to predict, brainstorm prior knowledge, and to make inferences. Beginning Self-Monitoring Questions (Appendix D) were introduced to students to enhance inferencing skills. The strategy Directed Reading and Thinking Activity (DRTA) was taught. The students in School A used all of the above reading strategies while reading the stories Charlotte's Web, Magic Comes in Its Own Time, and The Hundred Dresses. The students in School B used all of the above reading strategies while reading the 1997 basal text, Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, Naturally and Pitch In.

The same interventions that had been previously introduced and implemented continued in the classrooms during the fourth, fifth, and sixth weeks. As DRTA continued, various graphic organizers were introduced to the students. After predictions were made and verified, students recorded information on the various graphic organizers (Appendices B, and C). The ultimate goal of graphic organizers is for students to see how ideas are related. The organizers serve as a visual blueprint of the written text.

Week seven continued at Schools A and B as weeks four, five, and six had with a few exceptions. Various graphic organizers (Appendices G and J) at School A were introduced to show students how to organize a content area subject such as social studies. The teacher researcher used the social studies text, Communities Near and Far, published by Macmillan. Graphic organizers (Appendices E, F, H, and I) at School B were introduced to show students how to visually map out the literary elements in a fiction story. School B used fiction stories from the basal themes Naturally and Pitch-In, published by Macmillan/McGraw-Hill. The next strategy that the teacher researchers at Schools A and B introduced was the Question Answer Relationship Strategy (QAR). An overview of the strategy was introduced to the classes. The researchers then modeled and practiced finding the answers to Right There Questions as a class. Then the students worked independently to write and find the answers to their own Right There Questions.

The week seven interventions were continued in weeks eight and nine at Schools A and B. The teacher researchers provided practice in finding the answers to Think and Search Questions in the QAR Strategy.

The same interventions were continued in weeks ten and eleven at Schools A and B. The addition of the Author and Me Question was taught and modeled in week ten, and the On My Own Question was taught and modeled in week eleven.

Week twelve continued with all interventions previously taught at Schools A and B. The intervention added during this week was that of Literary Circles. There were three groups consisting of eight students each at School A. There were three groups; each group had five participating students at School B. The teacher researchers introduced and modeled the Literary Circle Strategy (Appendices M, N, O, P, Q, R, S,

and T). On Monday, they taught the students how to be Discussion Directors. After this Literary Circle job was modeled, each student demonstrated the Discussion Director's job. On the following days, the researchers followed the same above stated procedures for the rest of the Literary Circle jobs. All students were engaged in learning because the presenters were demonstrating their knowledge of a self-selected book. The students who did not read this book enjoyed listening to their peer's book discussion.

During weeks thirteen and fourteen, the students at Schools A and B participated in student run Literary Circles. All targeted students continued to participate in Accelerated Reading and SSR. Literary Circles groups were formed according to the students' preference for reading a certain book. The book choices for School A were Helen Keller or Invasion of the Comet People. The book choices for School B were Jonathan Chapman or Project Roots: Kids Make A Dream Come True.

In weeks fifteen and sixteen at Schools A and B, all interventions continued daily, the teacher researchers administered another S.T.A.R. Test, and students were asked to fill out an attitudinal post survey (Appendix U).

Presentation and Analysis of Results

The teacher researchers at targeted Schools A and B discovered through the S.T.A.R. posttest that a majority of the students who participated in the action research plan increased their IRL and GE levels. The tables below indicate the results of the research.

Table 7

Instructional Reading Level Pre and Posttest Results School A

IRL	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pretest School A	0	1	1	10	9	0	3
Posttest School A	0	1	2	5	6	8	2

The S.T.A.R. pre and posttest instruments at School A were identical. The reading strategies seemed to be effective for most students as reflected by the above data from School A in Table 7. When comparing the S.T.A.R. pre and posttests there was no growth at the IRL level at a pre-primer, 1st, or 2nd grade. These targeted third grade students have been identified as Learning Disabled and have their own Individual Educational Plan (I.E.P.). The average IRL on the S.T.A.R. pretest for the students tested in School A was 3.63. The average IRL on the S.T.A.R. posttest for the students in School A was 4.00. The S.T.A.R. posttest indicates that there was an average increase of .37 on the targeted students' IRL scores.

Table 8

Instructional Reading Level Pre and Posttest Results School B

IRL	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pretest School B	0	4	2	7	9	7	5	0	0	1	0	0
Posttest School B	0	2	0	7	5	12	5	0	1	1	0	1

The S.T.A.R. pre and posttest instruments at School B were identical. The reading strategies seemed to be effective for most students as reflected by the above data from School B in Table 8. The average IRL on the S.T.A.R. pretest for the students tested in School B was 3.97. The average IRL on the S.T.A.R. posttest for the students in School B was 4.73. The S.T.A.R. posttest indicates that there was an average increase of .76 on the targeted students' IRL scores.

Table 9

Grade Equivalent Pre and Posttest Results School A

GE	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pretest School A	0	1	5	10	4	3	0
Posttest School A	0	1	2	8	6	5	2

The S.T.A.R. pre and posttest instruments at School A were identical. The reading strategies seemed to be effective for most students as reflected by the above data from School A in Table 9. When comparing the S.T.A.R. pre and posttests there was no

growth at the GE level at 1st grade. This targeted third grade student has been identified as Learning Disabled and is on an Individual Educational Plan (I.E.P.). The average GE on the S.T.A.R. pretest for the students tested in School A was 3.13. The average GE on the S.T.A.R. posttest for the students in School A was 3.75. The S.T.A.R. posttest indicates that there was an average increase of .62 on the targeted students' GE scores.

Table 10

Grade Equivalent Pre and Posttest Results School B

GE	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pretest School B	0	0	2	6	11	12	2	1	1	0	0
Posttest School B	0	0	1	3	6	13	7	1	2	0	1

The S.T.A.R. pre and posttest instruments at School B were identical. The reading strategies seemed to be effective for most of the targeted fourth and fifth grade students as reflected by the above data from School B in Table 10. The average GE on the S.T.A.R. pretests for the students tested was 4.37. The average GE on the S.T.A.R. posttest for the students was 5.15. The S.T.A.R. posttest indicates that there was an average increase of .78 on the targeted students' GE scores.

The Instructional Reading Levels (IRL) are Pre-Primer (PP), Primer (P), and 1-12. This is the reading grade level at which the student can recognize words and comprehend material with assistance. It represents the highest level at which the student demonstrated at least 80% proficiency. The Grade Equivalents (GE) range from 0.0 to 12+ and represent how the student performed relative to others in the norming sample. For

example, if a student has a GE of 4.7, this student's score is equal to that of a typical fourth grader in the seventh month, based on these national norms.

After reviewing the posttest IRL and GE data the teacher researchers at Schools A and B strongly believe that the interventions: building prior knowledge, DRTA, using graphic organizers, basic self-monitoring questions, and QAR were responsible for increasing the students' scores on the post S.T.A.R. test. Through the teacher researchers ongoing observations the increase in student literal and inferential comprehension has been documented.

In order to assess the effects of an increased intrinsic motivation to read the teacher researchers used the reading incentive program, Accelerated Reader combined with teacher read aloud and SSR. The self-selection of books was an essential element that helped make the program successful. The students appeared to be more invested in their reading, since they selected a book that was of interest to them. At School A, an average of three students a week asked to stay in during their lunch recess in order to continue their SSR time. This continues to be an enjoyable part of School A's daily routine. It was evident at School B that the students looked forward to the teacher read aloud time and SSR time, when some students asked: "Can we start teacher read aloud earlier than usual today?" "I think, I know what is going to happen next in the story!"

During the month of September, School A had five students qualify for lunch with the teacher. This number rose to seven students in October and thirteen in November. In December, sixteen students earned the privilege of eating lunch with the teacher. In January and February, the number of students rose to twenty-one. At School B, in the months of September and October there were a total of five students who qualified to eat

lunch with their teacher and to have a special dessert. This number increased to twelve students in the months of November and December. In January and February, the number of students rose to nineteen.

It was evident through teacher observations that the majority of the students enjoyed making predictions, inferences, and ultimately becoming detectives to see if their predictions were correct. Only a handful of students had problems with organization. They had problems keeping their papers together, and if they misplaced one of their organizers, there were gaps in their final summaries.

Another intervention in our action plan that helped increase students' inferential and literal reading comprehension was class brainstorming and using K-W-L charts to connect prior knowledge to new knowledge. Predictable literature enabled the students to successfully use context clues to make predictions about the story. DRTA was another intervention taught to promote predicting, checking, and verifying. The students were able to transfer their verbal successes to more difficult written text. After students internalized the process, they were successfully able to do this independently.

An intervention in our action plan was the use of a variety of graphic organizers. This provides the students with a visual blue print of the written text, which helped them, retain and transfer the knowledge. Through teacher observations reluctant readers chose picture graphic organizers and emergent readers chose more of an abstract form of graphic organizer. Since the teacher researchers provided many different types of organizers, students were able to choose one that best fit their learning styles.

While teaching QAR at Schools A and B, the teacher researchers observed that the students had little difficulty with the Right There questions. They had some difficulty

finding the complete answer to the Think and Search Questions. The majority of the students had no difficulty answering the Author and Me Questions. Students had the most difficulty finding and answering On My Own Questions because it involves previous knowledge, life experiences, and a broad knowledge of topics. The researchers had to spend more time modeling and practicing the On My Own Questions. The students seemed to feel comfortable with the slow introduction of the different types of questions.

QAR was a successful intervention in our action plan that taught the students to analyze inferential and literal reading comprehension questions. This method enabled students to answer questions more effectively and provided a method to learn the difference between literal and inference questions in written text. The teacher researchers observed students writing in the margin of the paper what type of question was being asked: for example, RT (Right There Question). This intervention was the most successful intervention used by the teacher researchers.

The final intervention in the action plan was teaching in-depth Self-Monitoring Questions. Both Schools A and B introduced the intervention by using pictures then adding captions to the pictures. Next, the teacher researchers moved to written text, which was more detailed in nature. These questions helped students gain insights into the character development, conflicts, and possible solutions to the problems in the story. This metacognitive intervention proved to be too difficult for the targeted students at Schools A and B to master during the sixteen-week action plan. However, all the other interventions were very successful.

Students from Schools A and B showed a noticeable difference between the quality of their first Literary Circle presentation to that of their later presentations. When

students presented their first Literary Circle, their presentations were scripted and read. After the second round of Literary Circles, students appeared more self-confident. They discussed not read when presenting, and their interactions were lively and spontaneous. Teacher researchers observed that student participation was more lively when students led the Literary Circle, and the reluctant readers felt as successful as the more able readers did.

It appeared to the teacher researchers that the students looked forward to the interaction of leading and sharing their book project. The students seemed to enjoy having a "book talk" with their peers. They demonstrated a higher order of thinking skills when they asked in-depth self-monitoring questions. "How would the character change if the setting was different," is an example of their use of self-monitoring questions. In addition, to the S.T.A.R. pre and posttest, the teacher researchers used anecdotal observations to obtain data related to the students' reading attitudes.

Table 11

Student Attitudinal Pre and Posttest Survey Results School A

	No	Yes	Sometimes
Pre-Survey School A	0%	41%	59%
Post-Survey School A	0%	32%	68%

Note. Question 1. Do you read at home?

The students at School A were given a pre and post survey regarding their attitudes and insights about reading. Table 11 indicates that the percent of students who said that they sometimes read at home was higher than the percent of students who said

they read at home regularly. No students responded that reading did not take place at home. The targeted students were asked the same question on the posttest. An overwhelming percentage of students read at home, and the remainder of the students sometimes read at home after the interventions. No students responded that reading did not take place at home.

Table 12

Student Attitudinal Pre and Posttest Survey Results School B

	No	Yes	Sometimes
Pre-Survey School B	0%	43%	57%
Post-Survey School B	0%	44%	56%

Note. Question 1. Do you read at home?

The students at targeted School B were given a pre and post survey regarding their attitudes and insights about reading. Table 12 indicates that the percent of students who said that they sometimes read at home was higher than the percent of students who said they read at home regularly. Table 12 also indicates that a few of the students responded that they do not read at home regularly.

The majority of the students at Schools A and B have displayed an increased intrinsic motivation to read. During the day, the researchers noted that rather than going to classroom learning stations; students were reading their Accelerated Reader books. This class is accumulating more Accelerated Reader points than previous classes. However, there are a few students who read only because they have to read. The teacher researchers have seen an increase in the number of students who have earned an 80% or

higher competency level on the Accelerated Reader Book Test. This has been documented by the numeric point value accumulated on each student's Accelerated Reader Report.

The following graphs represent the results of the open-ended questions on the attitudinal pre and post-surveys at Schools A and B. Questions four and five on the pre-survey and questions three through seven post-surveys were open-ended.

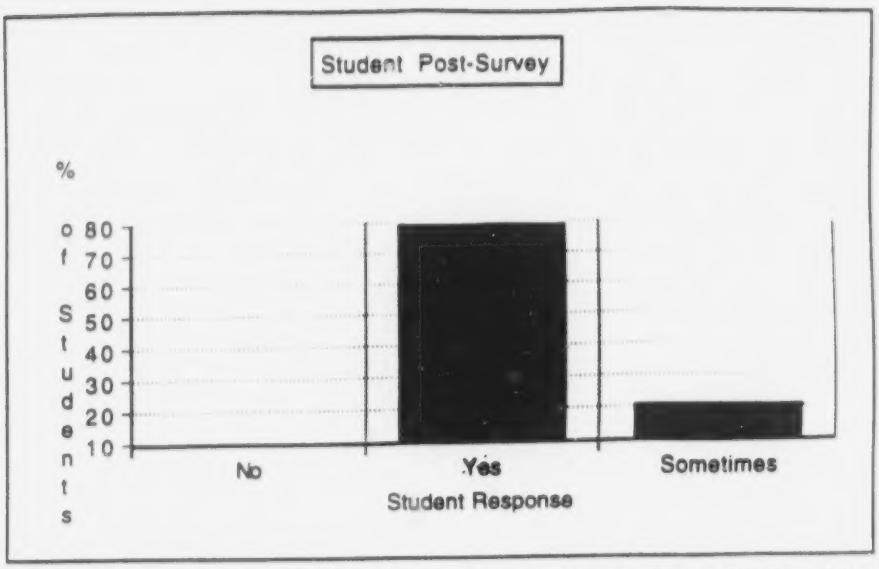

Figure 9 Question 2- Do you feel like a better reader now than at the start of the year?- School A

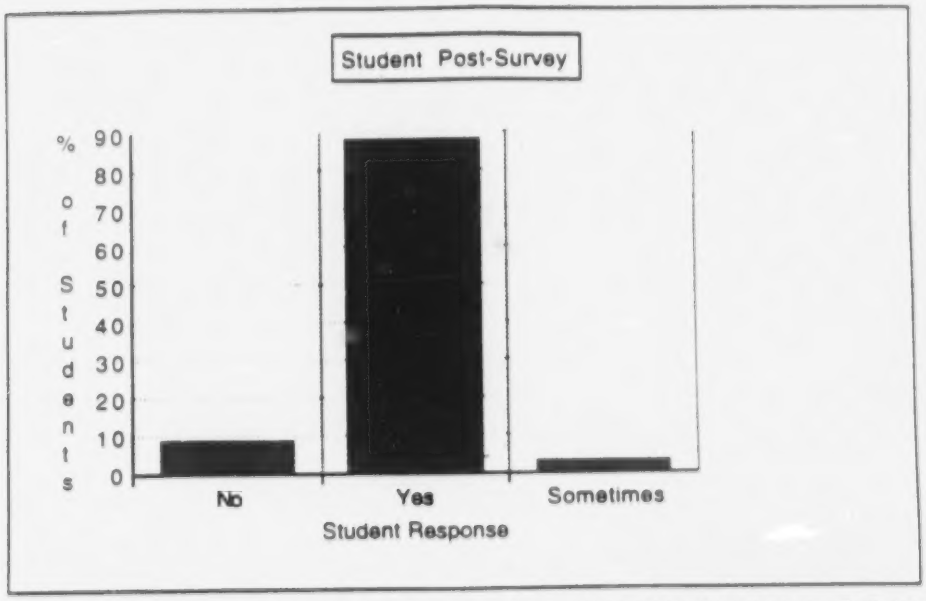

Figure 10 Question 2- Do you feel like a better reader now than at the start of the year?- School B

Figures 9 and 10 indicate that a majority of the targeted students at Schools A and B thought that they were better readers now than at the beginning of the school year. A quarter of the total targeted students felt that they sometimes felt like better readers, and a meager few felt that they were not better readers.

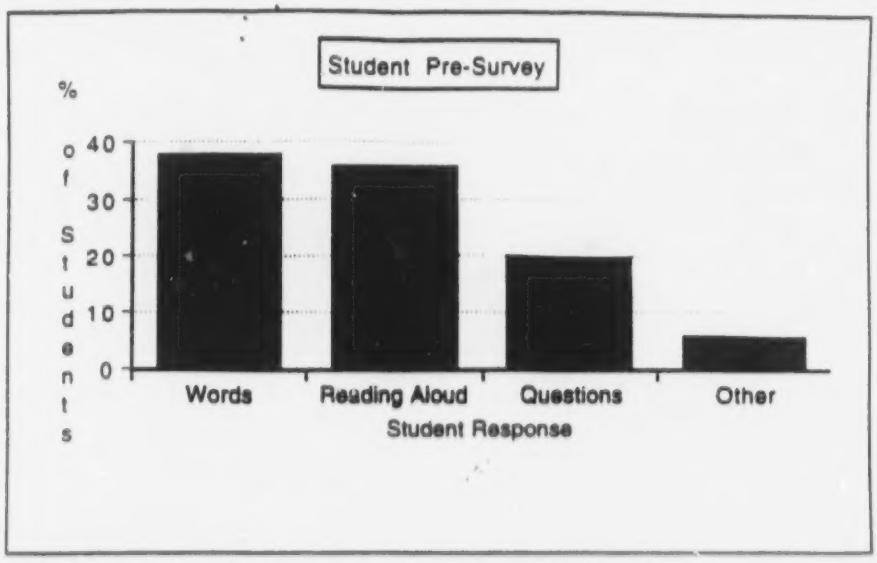

Figure 5 Question 4-What is the hardest part of reading?- School A

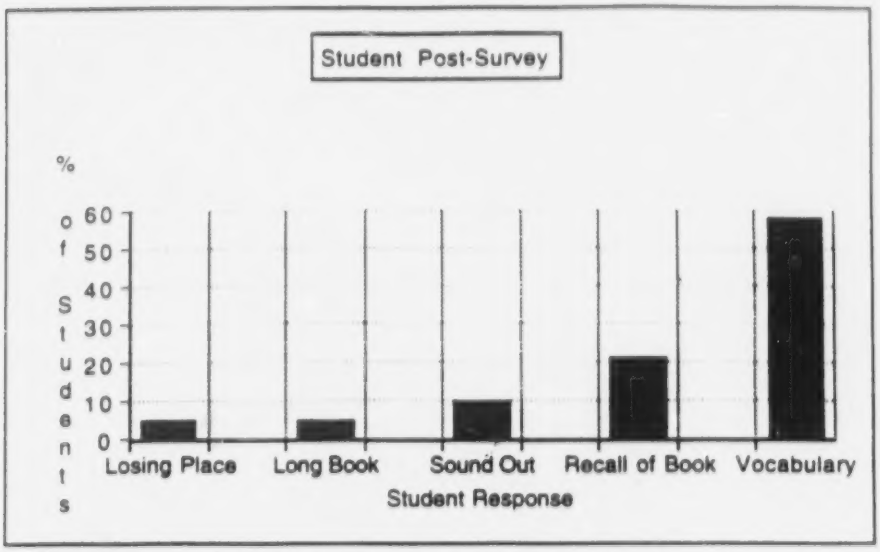

Figure 11 Question 3- What is the hardest part of reading?- School A

Figures 5 and 11 show that the targeted students at School A felt that vocabulary was the hardest part of reading on both the pre and posttests. Figure11 shows that the students felt recalling the book, sounding out words, reading long books, and losing their place while reading was a concern. These hardest parts of reading were different than

reading aloud and answering questions as indicated on the pretest.

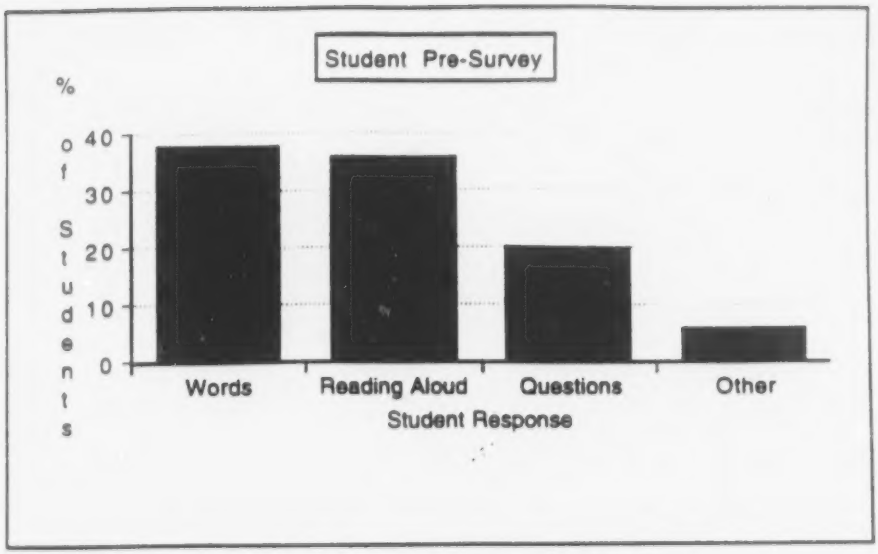

Figure 6 Question 4-What is the hardest part of reading?- School B

Figure 6 shows that the majority of the targeted students at School B felt that vocabulary and reading aloud were the hardest parts of reading. Less than a quarter of the students felt that answering questions was the hardest part of reading. A few students

indicated other areas. On figure 12, a majority of the targeted students indicated that vocabulary continued to be the hardest part of reading. The remaining students indicated that taking tests and answering questions were the hardest part of reading.

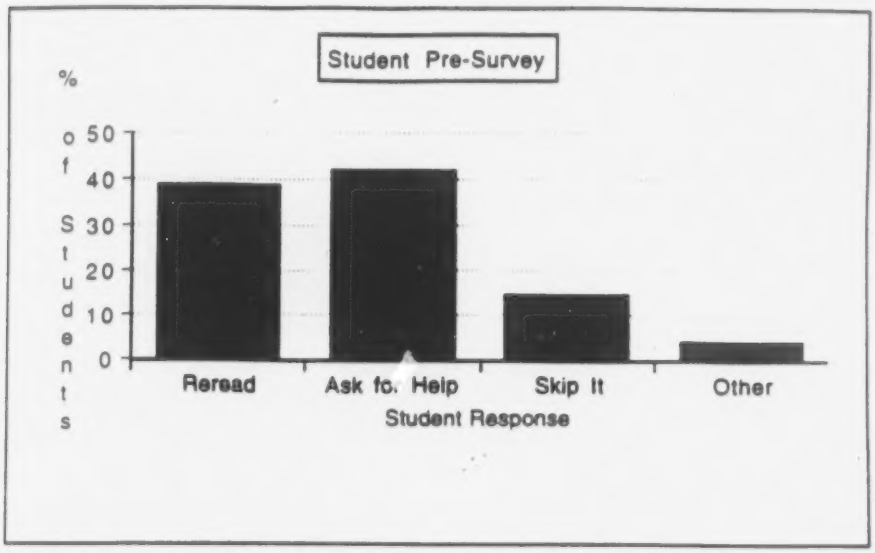

Figure 7 Question 5-What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?- School A

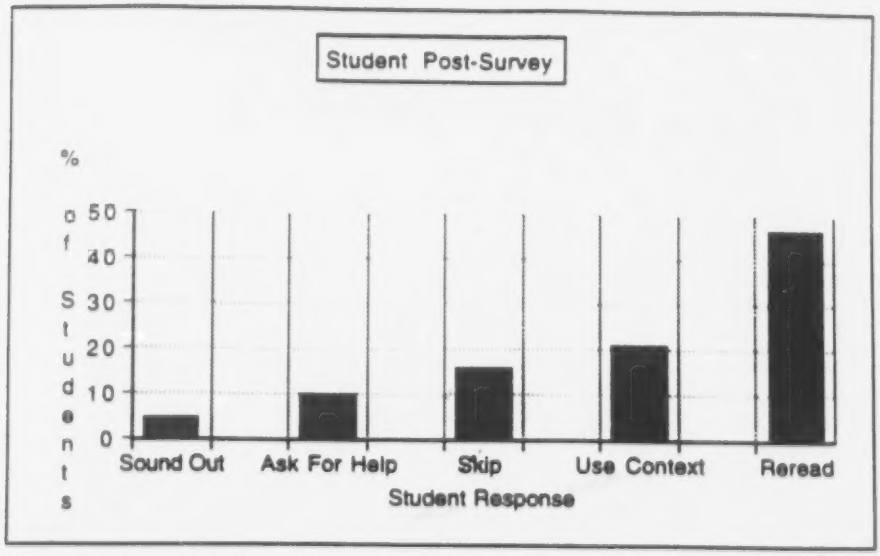

Figure 13 Question 4- What do you do when you read something that you don't understand- School A

Figures 7 and 13 show what the targeted students at School A did when they

did not understand something that they read. Figure 13 shows that more students reread and used the context of the sentence after interventions. Fewer students asked for help from adults. Approximately the same amount of students skipped the problem area.

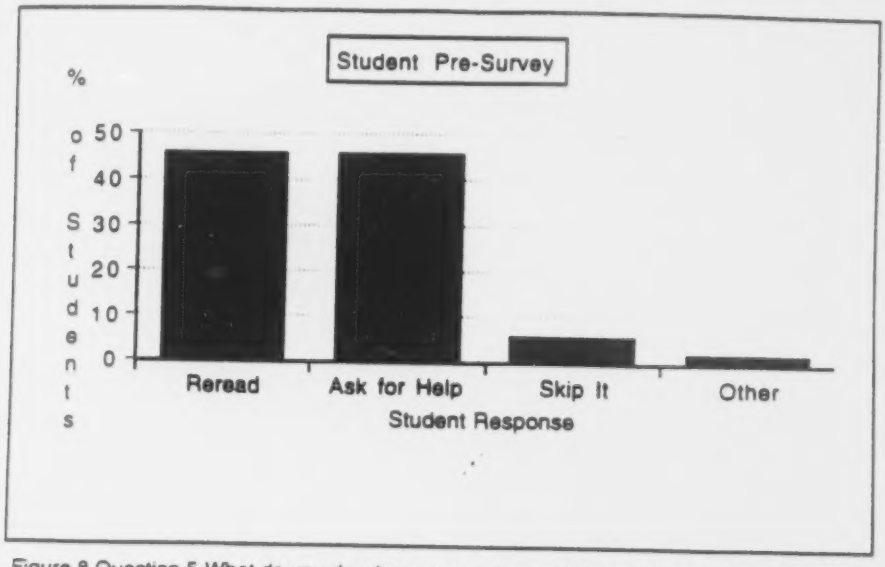

Figure 8 Question 5-What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?- School B

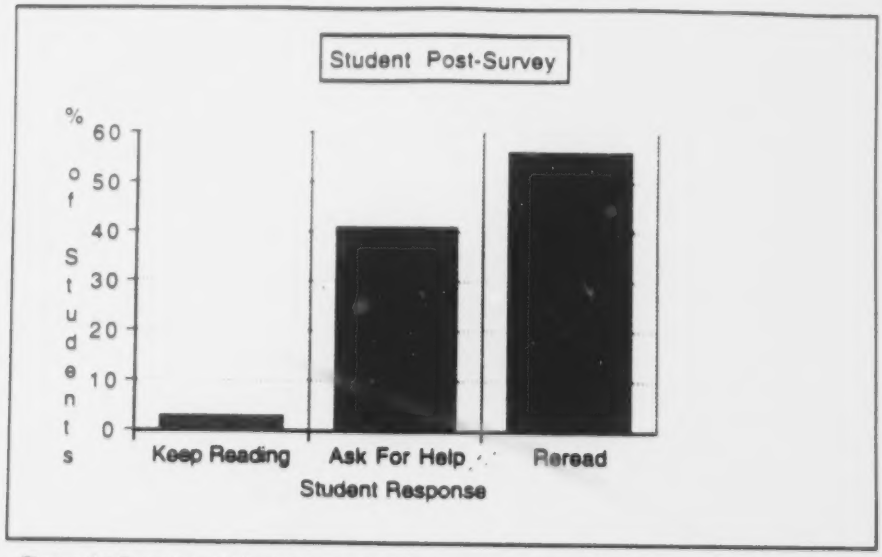

Figure 14 Question 4-What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?- School B

Figures 8 and 14 show what the targeted students in School B did when they

did not understand something. Figure 14 shows that more students reread the text, less students asked for help from adults, and fewer students just kept on reading after interventions.

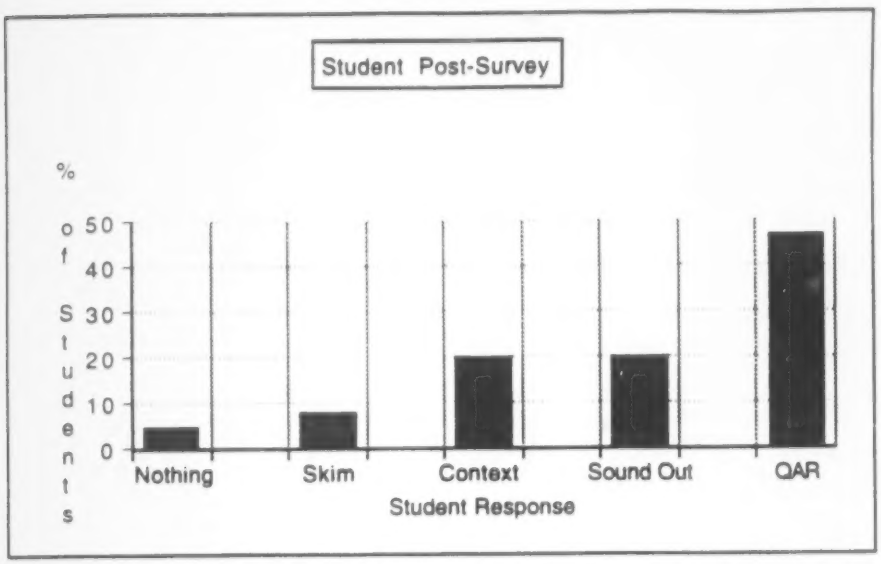

Figure 15 Question 5-What strategies have you learned to make you a better reader?- School A

When the targeted students at School A were asked what they thought were the strategies that helped them become better readers, the researchers found a variety of answers as indicated in figure 15. The majority of the students felt that QAR helped them the most. The response is equal for students who sound out words and for those who use context clues. Some students listed skimming, and some indicated that no strategies helped them.

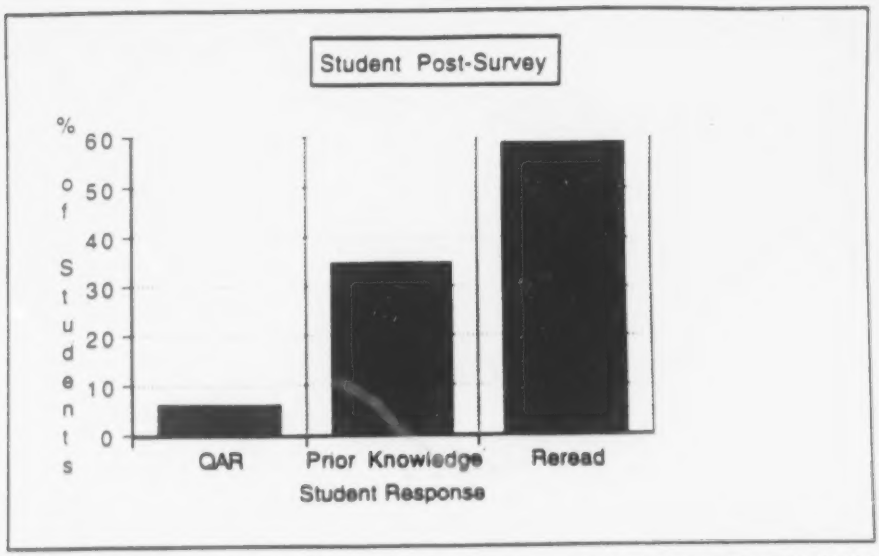

Figure 16 Question 5- What strategies have you learned to make you a better reader?- School B

Students at School B were asked what they thought were the strategies that helped them become better readers. Figure 16 indicates that more students reread the text. Some students used their prior knowledge, and a handful felt QAR made them a better reader.

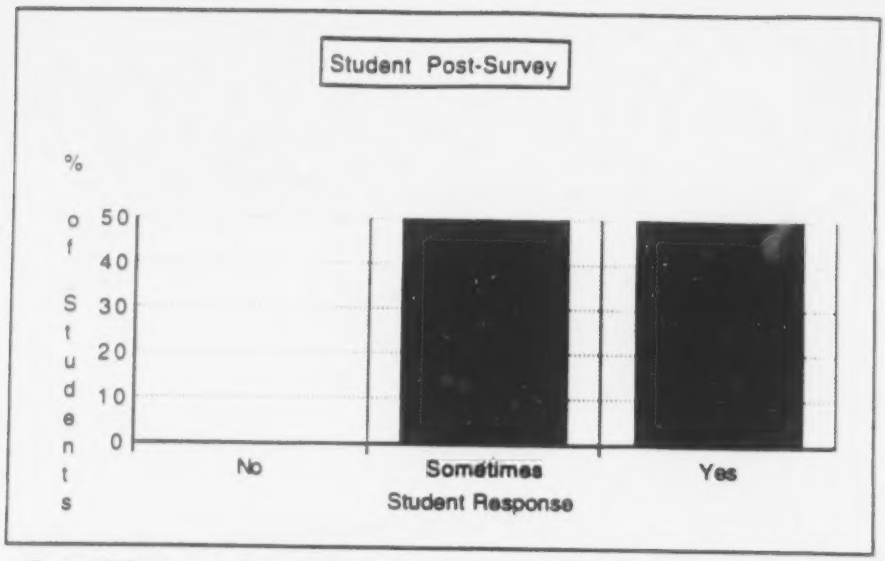

Figure 17 Question 6- Do you have a better understanding of what you read?- School A

Figure 17 shows that half of the students at School A felt that they had a better understanding of what they read, and half of the students felt that sometimes they had better understanding of what they read.

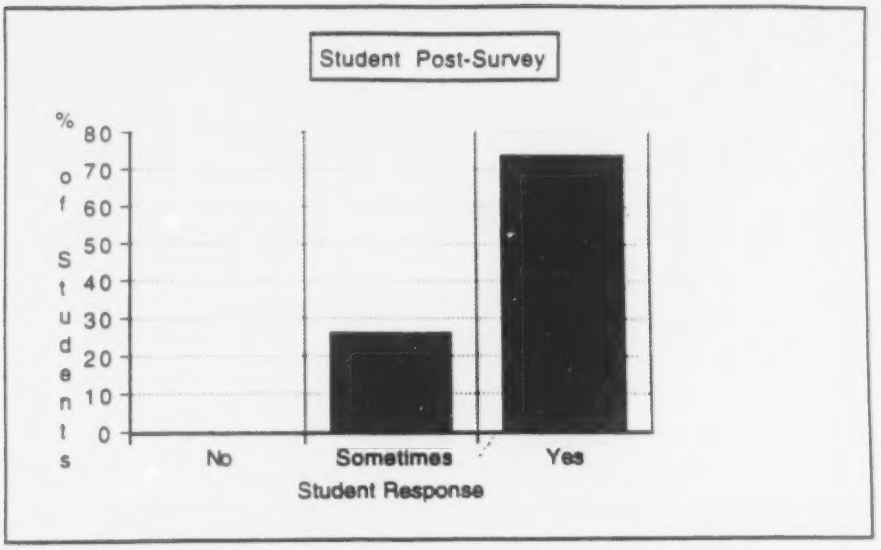

Figure 18 Question 6-Do you have a better understanding of what you read?- School B

Figure 18 indicates that three-fourths of the students at School B felt that they had a better understanding of what they read, and one-fourth of the students felt that they sometimes felt that they better understood what they read.

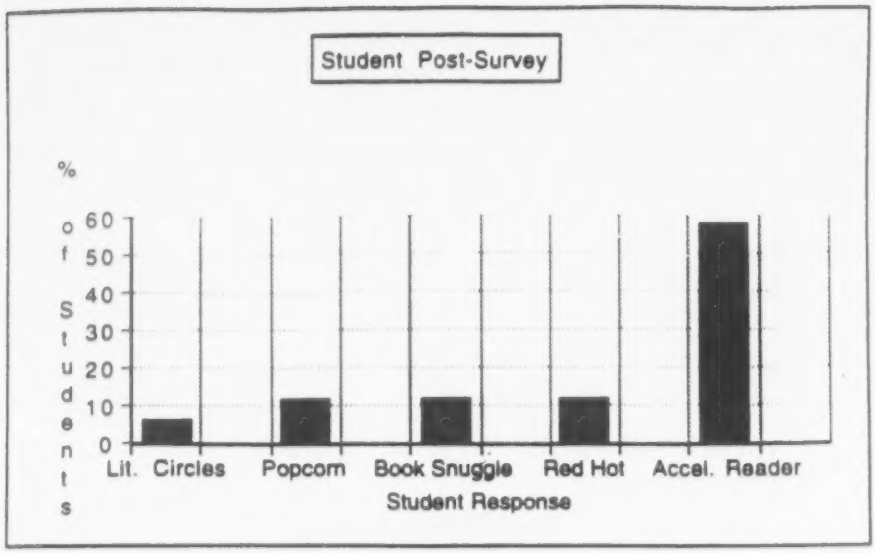

Figure 19 Question 7- What has been your favorite reading activity?- School A

Figure 19 at School A shows a variety of favorite reading activities. Six percent of the students enjoyed Literary Circles, and twelve percent of the students enjoyed the Popcorn reading activity which incorporates read aloud. Twelve percent of the students enjoyed Book Snuggle, which incorporates SSR, and twelve percent of the students preferred Red Hot, which includes rewards for answering QAR questions. Fifty-eight percent of the students enjoyed reading self-selected Accelerated Reader Books.

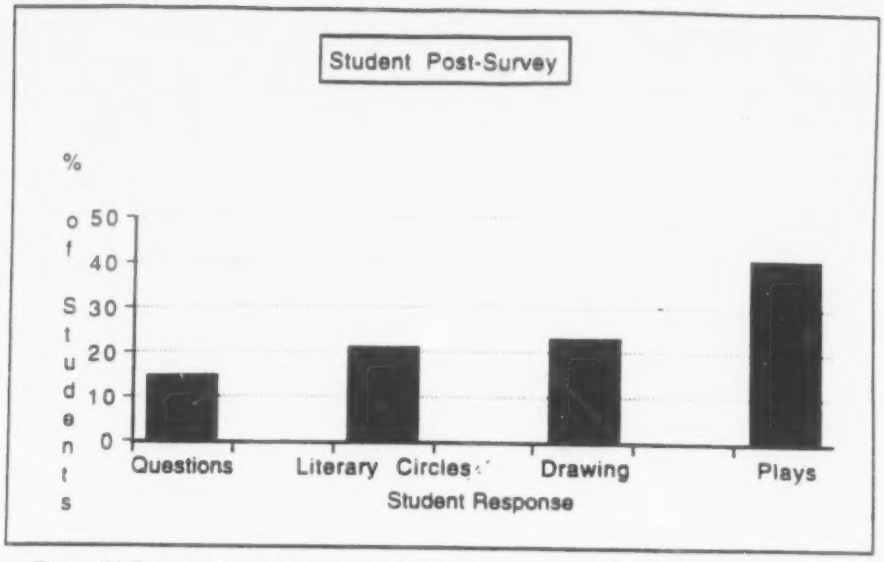

Figure 20 Question 7-What has been your favorite reading activity?- School B

Figure 20 at School B shows a variety of favorite reading activities. Fifteen percent of the students enjoyed answering QAR questions, and twenty-one percent of the students enjoyed participating in Literary Circles. Twenty-three percent enjoyed drawing literary elements, which is part of DRTA and Literary Circles. Forty-one percent of the students enjoyed participating in plays which incorporates read aloud projects. The only common activity between the two schools was Literary Circles.

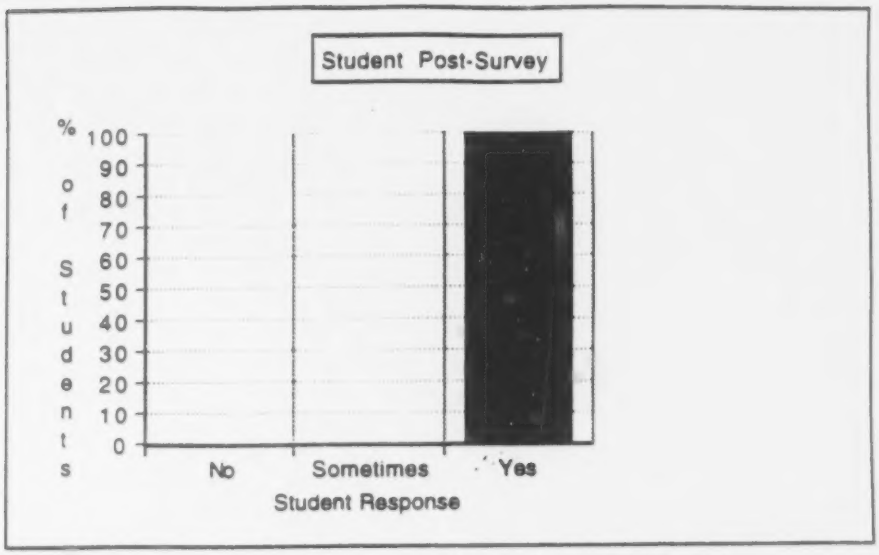

Figure 21 Question 8- Has your enjoyment of reading increased?- School A

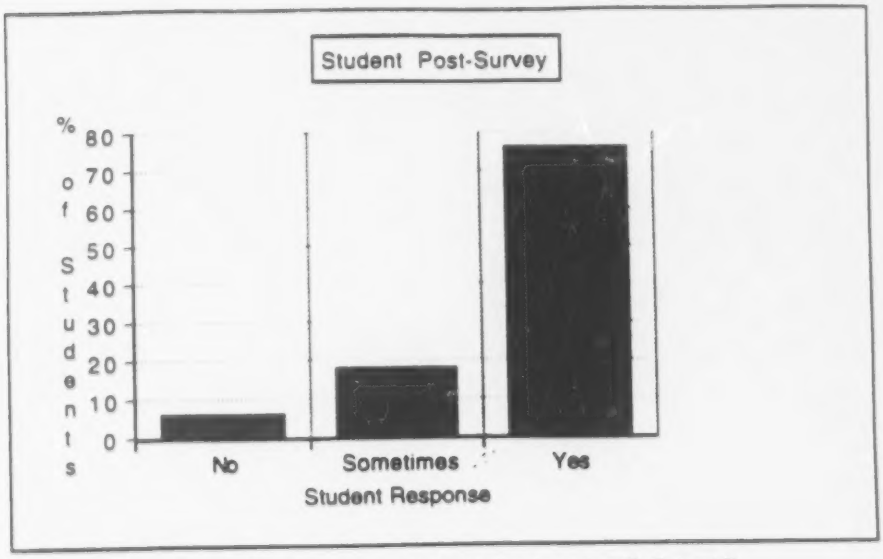

Figure 22 Question 8- Has your enjoyment of reading increased?- School B

Figures 21 and 22 at Schools A and B clearly show an overwhelming answer of yes to the question, "Has your enjoyment of reading increased?"

The teacher researchers believe that by increasing the students' intrinsic motivation to read and teaching specific interventions that became an integral part of the student's reading process were major factors in effecting this change in attitude.

After reviewing the data from the action plan the teacher researchers found an increase in intrinsic motivation to read due to the following strategies, Teacher Read Aloud, Accelerated Reader Program, and SSR time. The modeling strategy of Teacher Read Aloud provided the students with opportunities to enjoy exciting stories and exposure to new vocabulary. The Accelerated Reader Program was used so that students were able to self-select books. Teacher researchers felt that students are more invested in reading when they self-select books and have a consistent silent reading time. Another part of the action plan to increase intrinsic motivation was the strategy of Literary Circles. Self-selection of books read in the Literary Circles was one aspect of empowering students to read and lead their own discussions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data from Schools A and B indicated a definite growth in the IRL and the GE levels. The results from the attitudinal survey showed that reading has become more enjoyable to most of the targeted students. The teacher researchers have observed that reading has become easier across the curriculum.

Classroom teachers who are having difficulties improving students' intrinsic motivation to read, as well as, improving inferential and literal reading comprehension skills may want to incorporate the following interventions: Teacher Read Aloud and SSR time, Accelerated Reader Program, Brainstorming of Prior Knowledge, Predicting and Inferencing, DRTA, Graphic Organizers, QAR, Self-Monitoring Questions, and Literary

Circles. The teacher researchers feel strongly that the above interventions should be taught in the same sequence as stated in the action plan because each intervention serves as a bridge to the next intervention. For the interventions to succeed teachers should introduce one intervention at a time and model it. The students should be given ample time to internalize the intervention. Also having an uninterrupted block of time (60-90 minutes) five days per week is beneficial for success. The reason the teacher researchers felt their action plan was successful was because they provided a variety of interventions to appeal to the diverse multiple intelligences that exist in a classroom. These interventions can be adapted to any grade level.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Student Survey

1. Do you read at home?

   Yes No Sometimes

2. What types of things do you like to read the best? (Choose as many as apply.)

   _____science fiction ____mystery ____fantasy ____sports

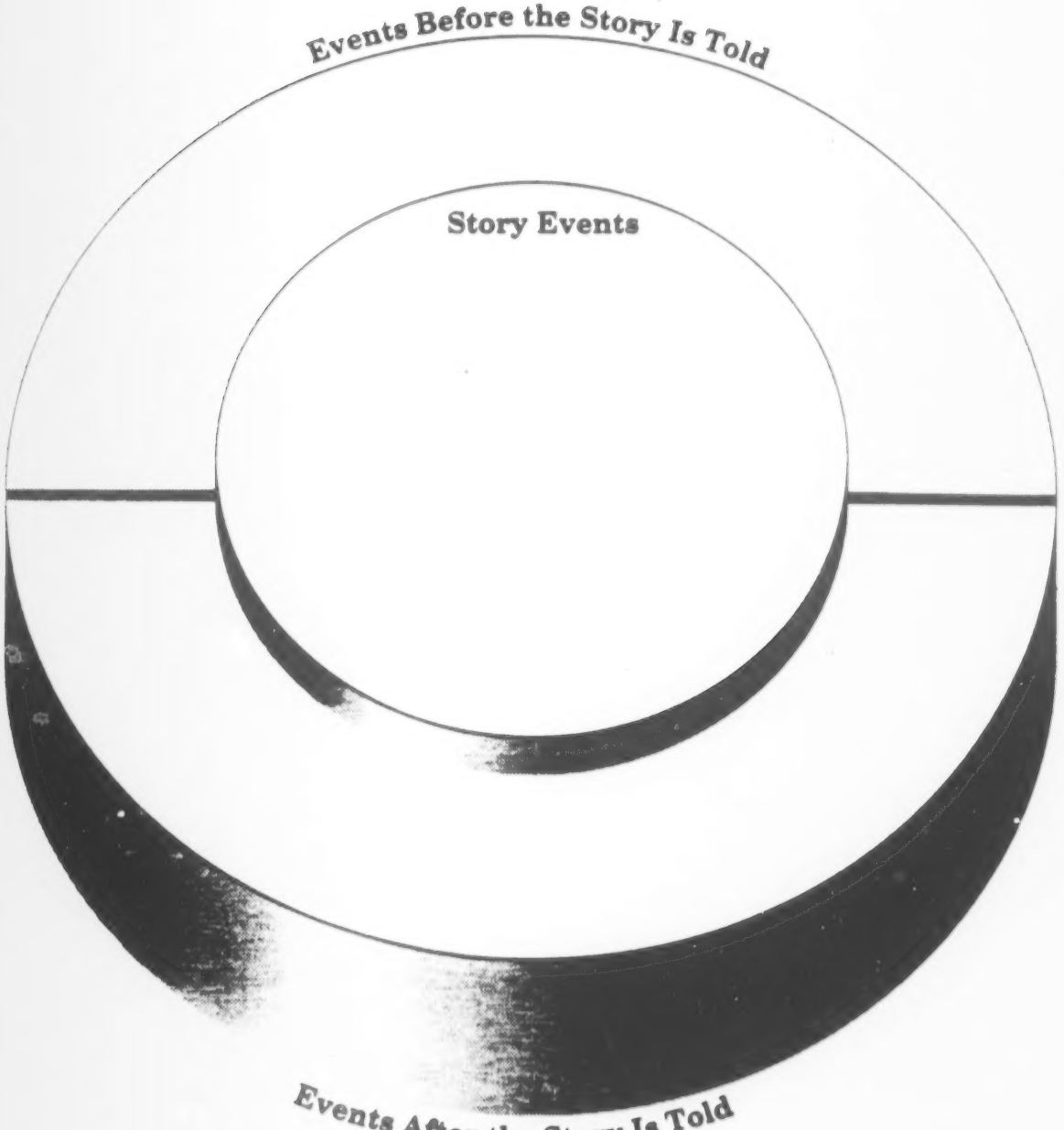
   ____adventure ____biographies ____science ____animal stories

   _____magazines _____ other

3. What is the best part of reading?

4. What is the hardest part of reading for you?

5. What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?

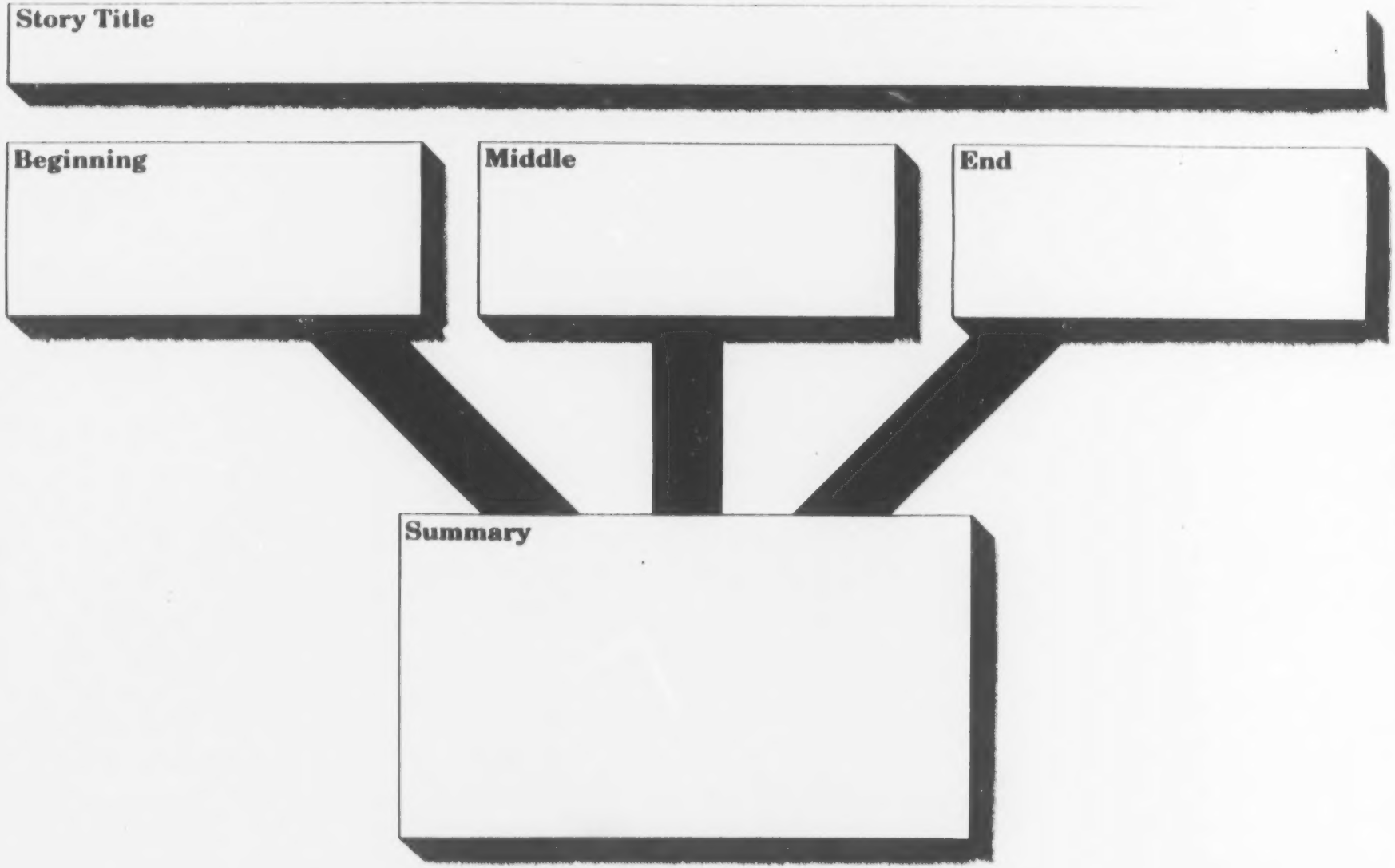

Events Before the Story Is Told
Story Events
Events After the Story Is Told

Pages	What I Predict	What Happens

Appendix D
Directed Reading Thinking Activity
(DRTA)

**Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA)

- -This is a guided reading strategy that promotes:
  - -Predicting
  - -Checking
  - -Verifying
- -DRTA turns a comprehension strategy into a strategy that students can use on their own when reading
- -In DRTA students are asked to do three things:
  - -Predict what each page or two is going to be about
  - -Then they read silently to check their predictions
  - -They're asked to prove their interpretations of what the author said
- -DRTA questions:
  - -What do you think?
  - -Why do you think so?
  - -Can you prove it?



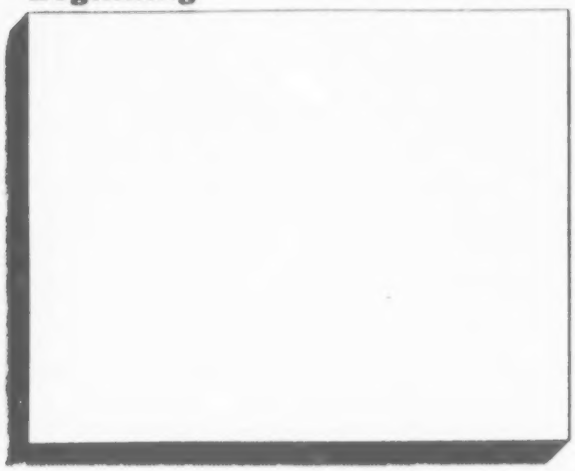
Macmillan / McGraw-Hill

Story Squares

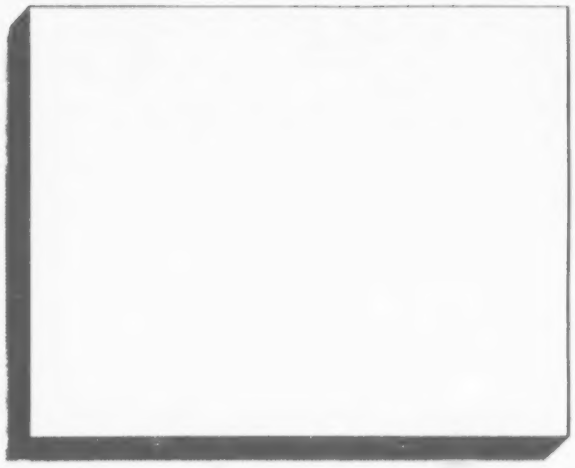
Name _____

Setting	Plot
Character 1	**Character 2**
Character 3	**Problem**
Solution	

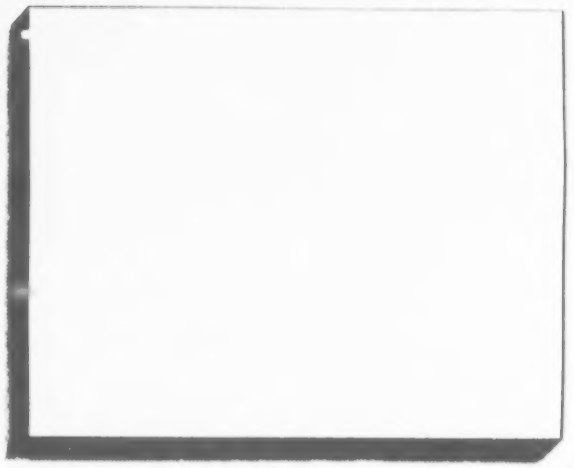
Beginning



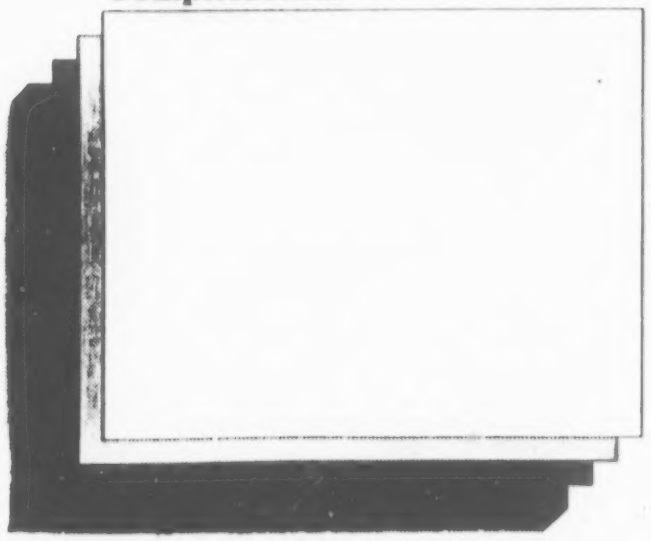
Problem



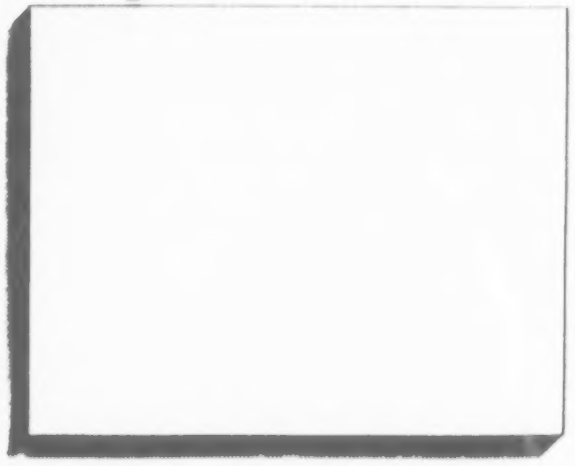
Events



Complications



Ending



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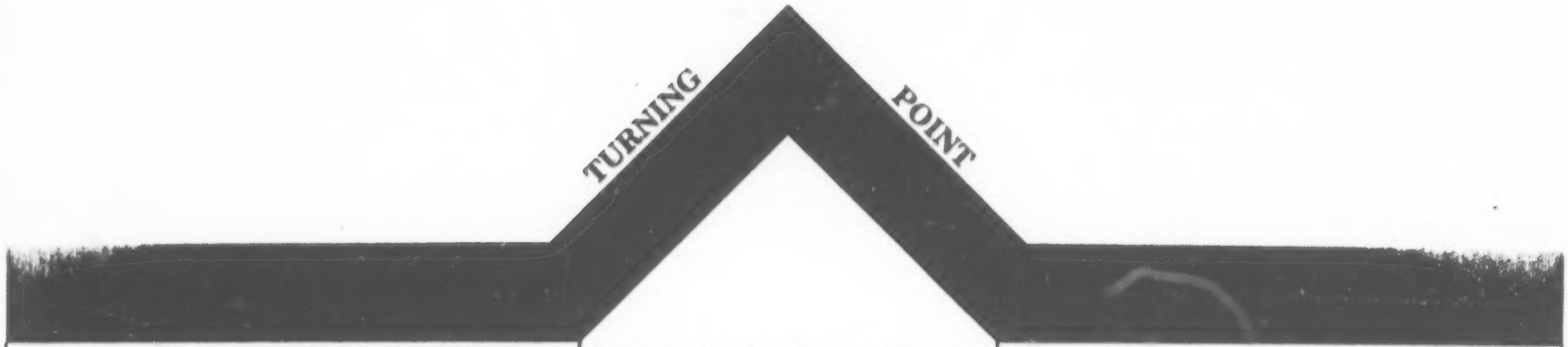
37 Story Board for Narrative Writing: To Sketch Story Ideas

93

Appendix G
Graphic Organizer

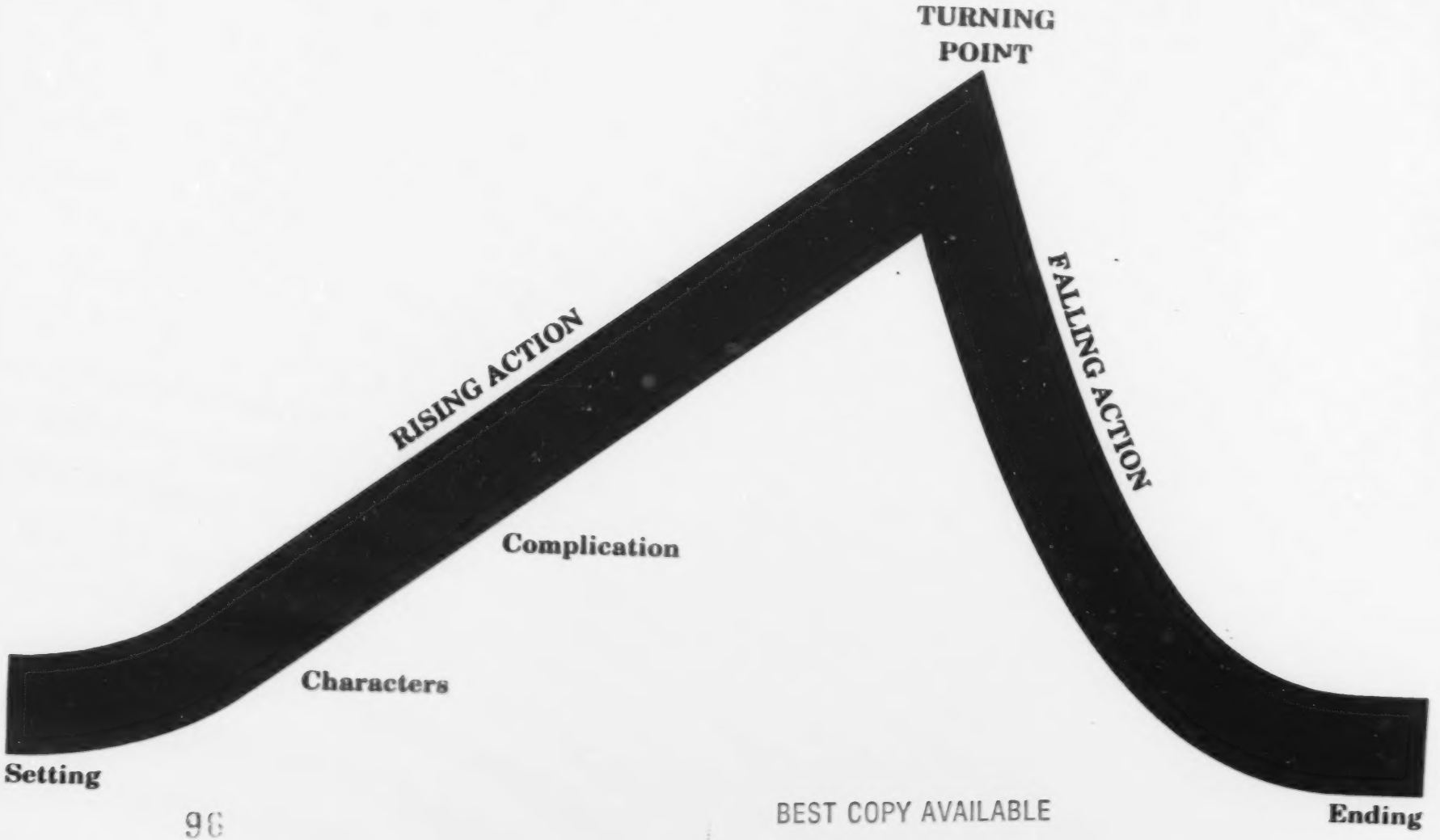
81



Character at Beginning of Story	Events that Caused Change	Character at End of Story

11 Character Change Story Map

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill



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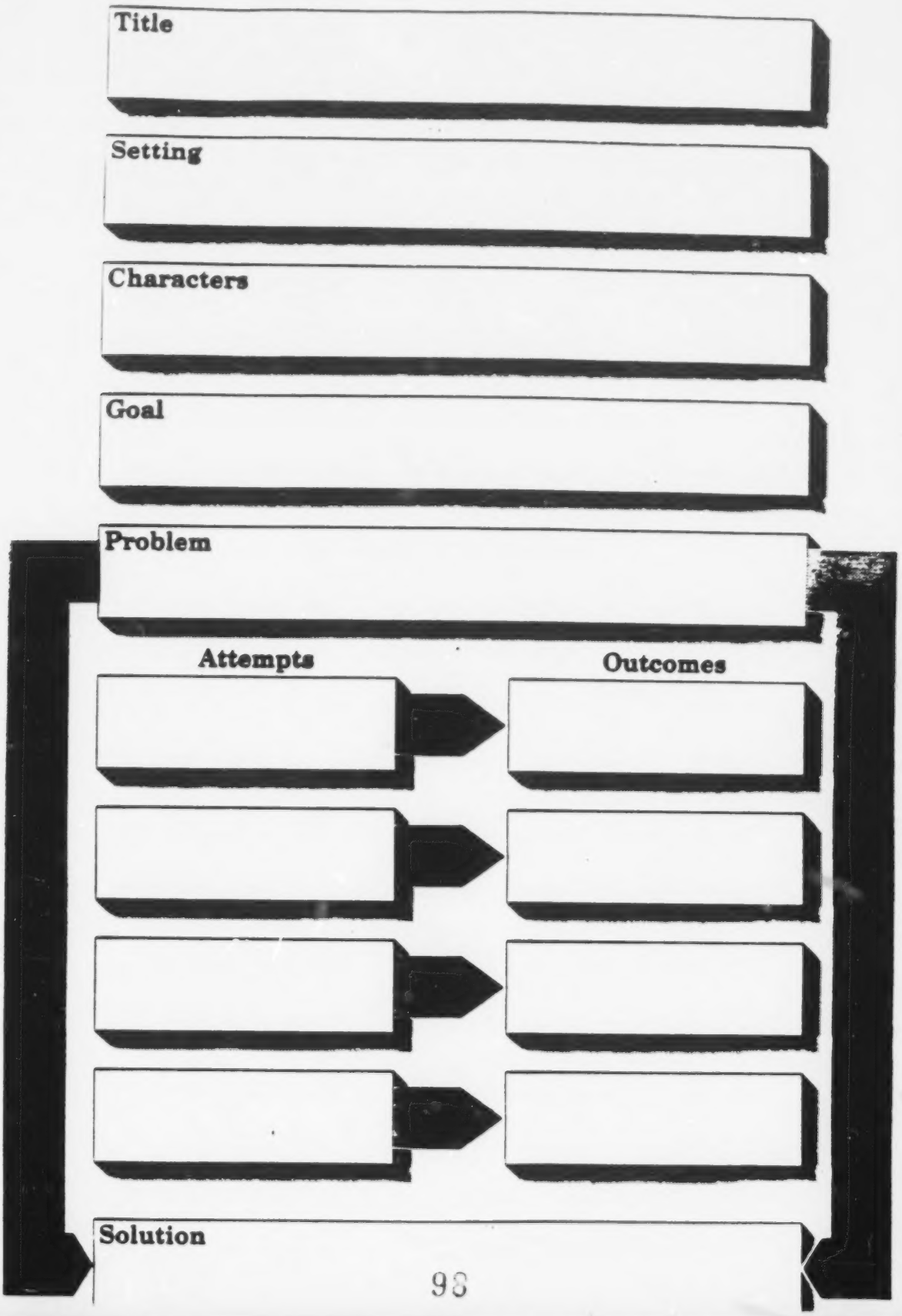
7 Rising Action / Turning Point / Falling Action Story Map

97


Title
Setting
Characters
Goal
Problem
Attempts
Outcomes
Solution

Appendix K
Question Answer Relationship
(QAR)

**Question Answer Relationship Strategy (QAR)

-There are four questions:

-**Right There** questions are literal questions in which the answer is found in one place on one page in the text.

-**Think and Search** questions are questions in which the students must look at different paragraphs and/or different pages to find an answer.

-**Author and Me** questions require the students to put pieces of the text and their own experiences together to find the answer.

-**On My Own** questions have the students ask and answer their own questions based on the main topic of the text.

Appendix L
Self-Monitoring Questions

**Self-Monitoring Questions

-There are five types of questions that the students ask themselves:

- -Character questions
  - -What kind of person is the character and why?
  - -What prompted the character's actions?
- -Setting questions
  - -Where does the story take place?
  - -When does it take place?
  - -What would happen to the character if the setting changes?
- -Conflict questions
  - -What problem does the character face?
  - -What caused the problem?
  - -How do you think the character will solve the problem?
- - Possible Resolution of the problem questions
  - -What did the character do first about the problem?
  - -What do you think the character will do next?
  - -Why wasn't the first attempt successful?
- -Resolution
  - -How was the problem finally solved?
  - -How does the character feel about it being solved?
  - -What are some other possible solutions?
  - -What will the character do now that the problem is solved?

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

Name_____ Title_____

Discussion Director: Your job is to develop a list of questions that your group might want to discuss about this part of the book or story. Don't worry about the small details: your task is to help people talk over the big ideas in the reading and share reactions to the text. Usually the best discussion questions come from your own thoughts, feelings, and concerns as you read, which you can list below during or after your reading. You may use some of the general questions below to develop topics for your group.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS OR TOPICS FOR TODAY:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

What was going through your mind while you read this?
How did you feel while reading this part of the book?
What was discussed in this section of the book?
What questions did you have when you finished this section?
Did anything in this section of the book surprise you?
What are the one or two most important ideas?
Predict some things you think will be talked about next..

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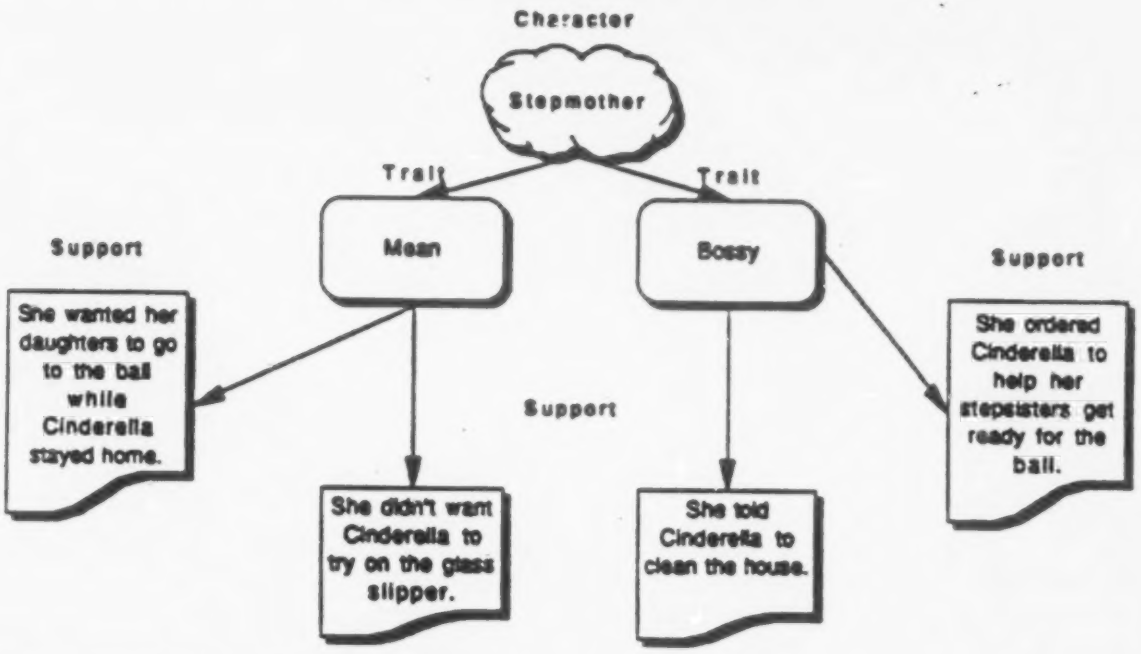
CHARACTER ANALYST

Name_____ Title_____

Character Analyst: Your job is to select two of the characters in the story and describe the characters using one or two word adjectives. After selecting two traits which describe the character, find two or three examples which support each trait you chose. For example, in the story Cinderella, the stepmother was evil and bossy. She was evil because she wanted her daughters to go to the ball while Cinderella stayed home. In addition, she did not want Cinderella to try on the glass slipper. The stepmother was bossy because she told Cinderella to clean the house. Secondly, the stepmother ordered Cinderella to help her stepsisters get ready for the ball. Avoid common and slang words such as nice, cool, awesome, etc.



Here are some examples of characteristics.

Strict	Friendly	Industrious	Kind	Dependable
Impatient	Mischievous	Loving	Brave	Bossy
Helpful	Understanding	Generous	Proud	Patient
Bully	Mean	Negative	Intelligent	Shy
Demanding	Imaginative	Caring	Witty	Wise
Diligent	Undependable	Easy-going	Stubborn	Trustworthy
			Curious	Thoughtful

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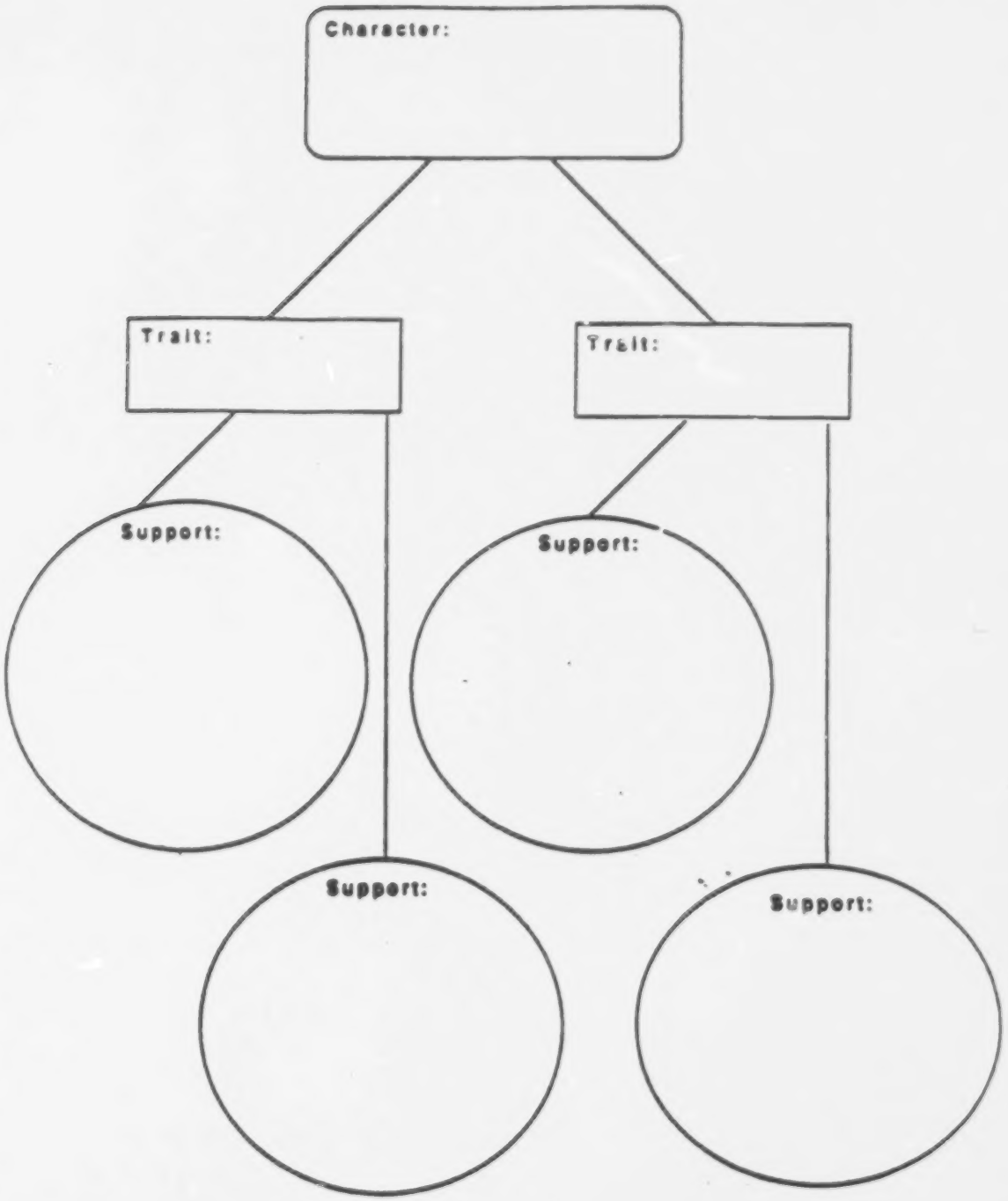
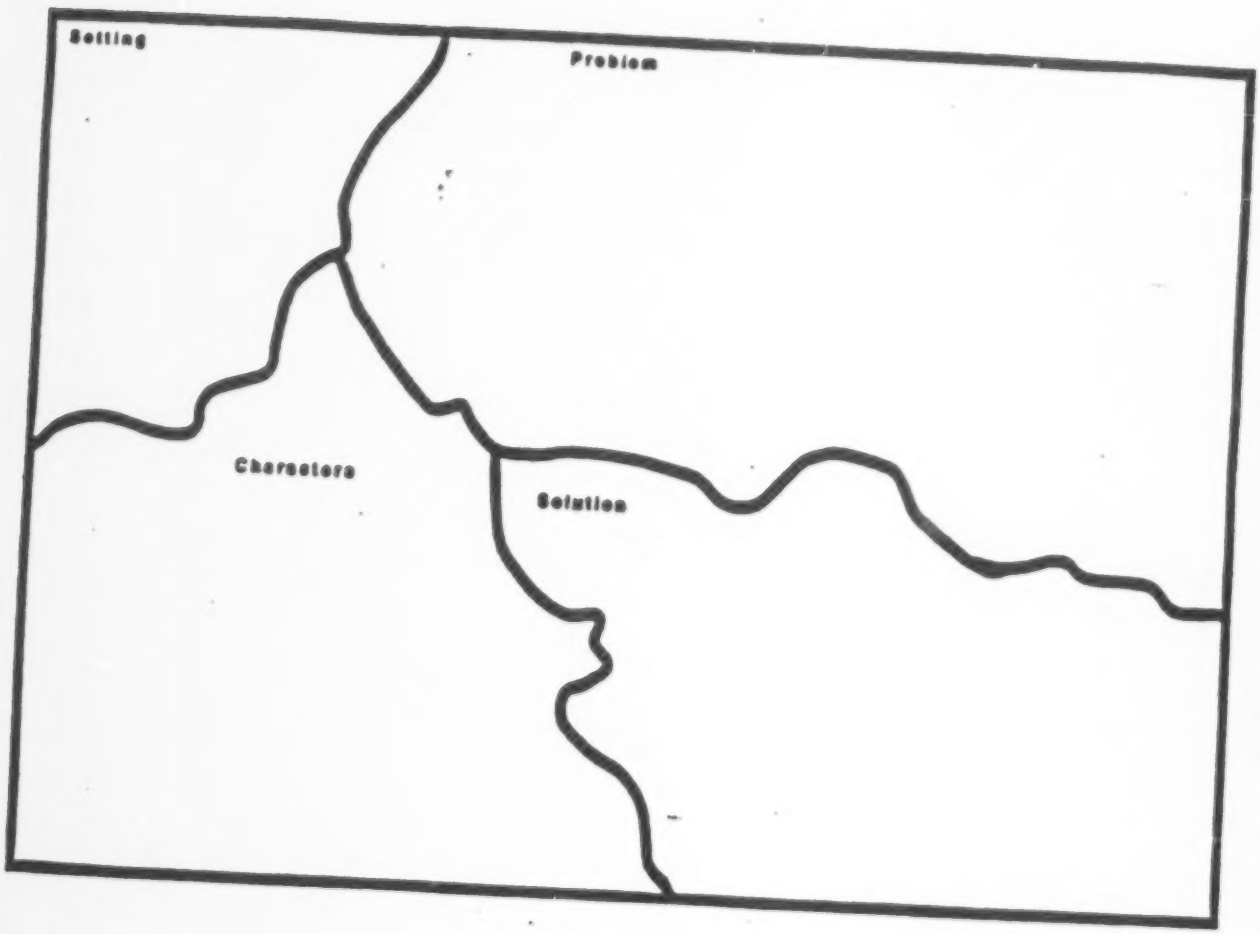
CHARACTER ANALYST



PLOT PUZZLER

Name_____ Title_____

Plot Puzzler: The plot of a story may be seen as a puzzle which the author puts together. Your job is to draw the puzzle pieces of the story you have read. What is the setting? Who are the characters involved? What is the problem.? How does the problem get solved? Put the puzzle pieces together puzzler.



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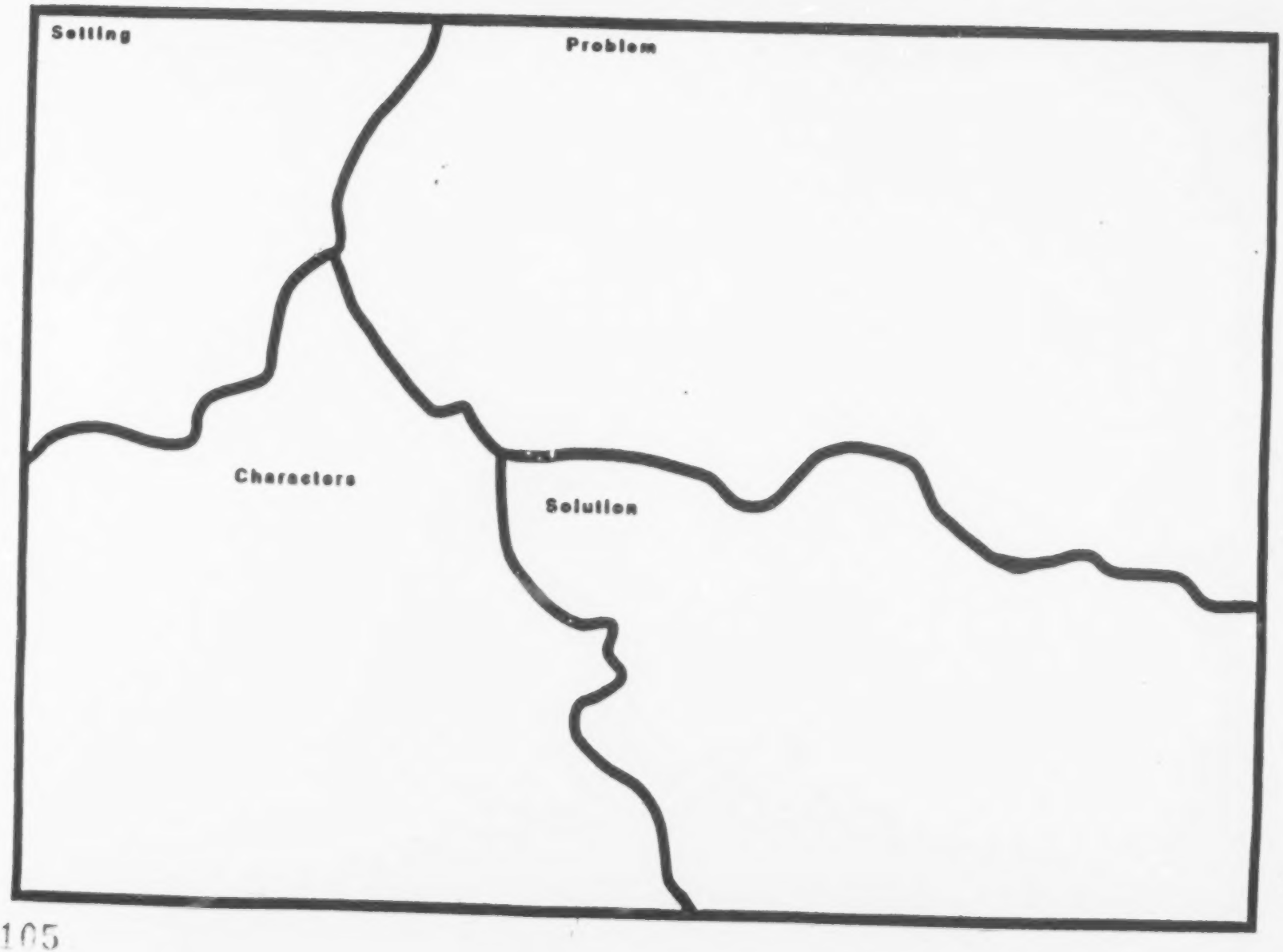
PLOT PUZZLER



SUMMARY STATESMAN

Name_____ Title_____

Summary Statesman: Your job is to fill in the story map as you are reading. Using the story maps, write a few papagraphs briefly summarizing what you've read.

SUMMARY STATESMAN
Setting/Main Characters
Home and school
Molly, Mama, Miss Shirley
Problem
The other children laugh at and make fun of Molly.
Event
The children tease Molly.
Event
The class has to make Pilgrim dishtowpin dolls.
Event
The children laugh at Molly's doll because it doesn't look like a Pilgrim.
Event
The teacher tells about modern Pilgrims and the Jewish holiday that inspired Thanksgiving.
Event
Molly goes home and tells her mother what the teacher discussed.
Solution
The children understand about Molly and decide to be friends with her.

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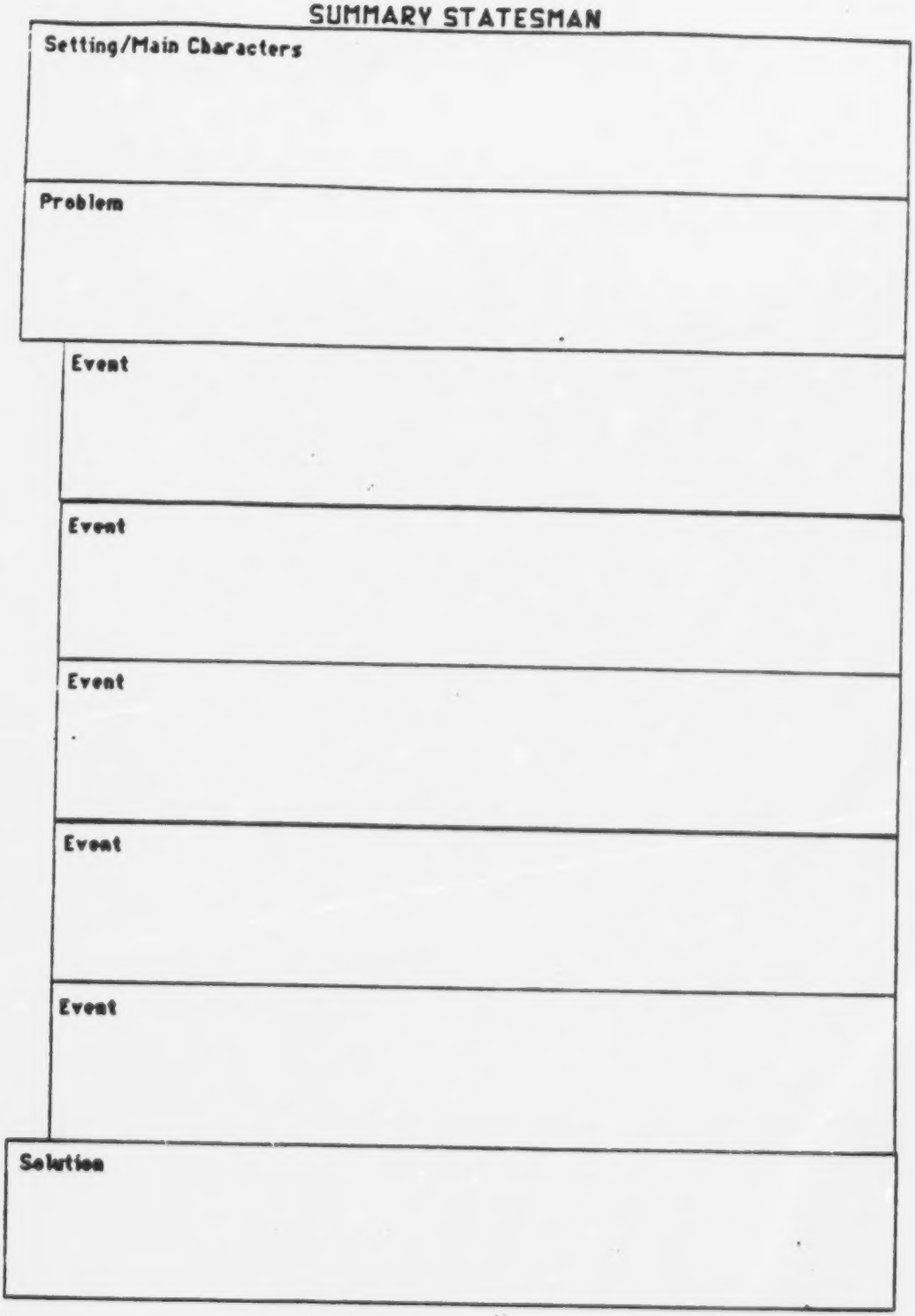
SUMMARY STATESMAN



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CONNECTOR

Name_____ Title_____

Connector: Your job is to find connections between the material your group is reading and the world outside the text. This means connecting the reading to your own life, to happenings at school or in the community, to similar events at other times and places, to other people or problems that you are reminded of. You might also see connections between this material and other writings on the same topic, or by the same author. There are no right answers here -- whatever the reading connects YOU with is worth sharing!

SOME CONNECTIONS I FOUND BETWEEN THIS READING AND OTHER PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS, AUTHORS ...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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Appendix U
Student Post-Survey

1. Do you read at home?

   Yes No Sometimes

2. Do you feel like a better reader now, than at the start of the school year?

   Yes No Sometimes

3. What is the hardest part of reading for you?

4. What do you do when you read something that you don't understand?

5. What strategies have you learned this year that have made you a better reader?

6. Do you have a better understanding of what you read?

   Yes No Sometimes

7. What has been your favorite reading activity?

8. Has your enjoyment of reading increased?

   Yes No Sometimes